

Introduction

THIS BOOK—*The Emerging Healthcare Leader: A Field Guide*—is all about you. Not your parents, not your preceptors, not the seasoned CEO whom you aspire to become. We wrote it with your healthcare career in mind and with our industry knowledge and experiences as guides. Why? Our answer is threefold.

First, we believe in the enormous contributions you can impart. Today, you may still be learning or struggling to enter healthcare. But tomorrow, you will be among the principals in the field—whether making operational and workforce decisions for a patient care unit or an entire facility, consulting with chief executives and governing boards, running a physician or clinical practice, developing and implementing national policies and standards, or teaching future leaders. Before then, you need to seek out as much advice and insight as possible to mentally and emotionally prepare yourself for the changes and challenges (and the joys) ahead. And we wish to be part—even in a small way—of your journey to get there.

Second, we are passionate about healthcare. Working in this industry—regardless of your job title—is formidable but also an awesome, rewarding privilege. We want to see the US healthcare system become the best in the world, and that can only happen if we put conscientious, well-trained, and caring people in the top positions. That starts with you. And you represent the next generation of leaders.

Third, we want to give back to the field. We are fortunate to have had countless mentors, colleagues, teachers, and superiors who graciously and generously invested time and effort in our own career development. This is why we have been so eager to return the favor by engaging graduate and undergraduate students year-round. We mentor them, review their resumes, and conduct mock interviews. Plus, we stay active and connected in the industry, an essential activity for any serious professional.

We designed the book to be a casual but an informative read—much like how we designed the early careerist sessions we present during the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) Congress on Healthcare Leadership. In fact, it was the positive reception to these sessions—along with the lessons we’ve both accumulated over the years—that convinced us to compile our advice and recommendations in book form. We can’t be more thrilled to share these with you and a larger audience of emerging leaders.

This second edition is an encore to our original text. In it, we expand the content to include two brand-new chapters on the topics of emotional intelligence and successful onboarding to new roles. We also dig a bit deeper into certain conversations and refresh the content around etiquette and social media. And, finally, we double down and add four new Notes to My 25-Year-Old Self from outstanding leaders in our industry.

WHO WE ARE

What makes us qualified to talk about career development? Like you, we were new to healthcare once, each armed only with a master’s degree in health administration and a desire to be involved in something bigger than ourselves. Like you, we sought guidance from others and pursued multiple opportunities. Like you, we have worked extremely hard to get where we are today.

Laurie became a hospital vice president at age 22 and then went on to become a healthcare consultant, an executive coach, a speaker, and now a graduate program director. Natalie—after a career as a schoolteacher and a stint as a director of a hospital’s retail services—became a hospital CEO at age 29 and has since served in leadership positions for a number of healthcare organizations, coming full circle as a CEO again. We realize that our results are not typical, given that senior-level positions take years to attain. But our results are examples of what’s possible when you commit yourself early to personal and professional development, to building relationships (which could one day lead to tremendous opportunities), and to presenting yourself as someone who is ready for the next level.

For nine years now, we have presented a well-received early careerist session during the ACHE Congress. This is a collaboration born out of our initial meeting ten years ago and our mutual interest in widening our professional scope and contributing to the field. Individually, we seize every opportunity to learn and to share that knowledge with up-and-comers—in or out of the industry.

Our education, ongoing training, diverse experiences, civic and professional activities, and everyday work duties give us a full picture of what a young careerist needs and wants.

WHAT THE BOOK IS AND IS NOT

This book is a guide, a reference, a resource, a companion manual. But it is *not* a textbook—nor is it your boss’s or CEO’s management book. It is yours. So put down your highlighter, grab your coffee mug, and get comfortable.

Superb graduate and undergraduate health administration programs do an excellent job of exposing their students to management and care delivery scenarios in actual organizations. These programs even offer elective courses focused on professional decorum and skill development. And that’s great!

Look at this book then as an extension of such a curriculum—and so much more. It is not stuffed with theories or academic language; instead, it is neatly packed with applicable strategies and straightforward (even amusing) examples. If you want to know what self-awareness is, for example, the book does not go on and on about the philosophy and psychology of the self. Rather, it gives you practical tips on how to become self-aware.

The content is tailored to the particular concerns or curiosities of a new healthcare graduate trying to build or expand a career, or even an established healthcare professional trying to switch disciplines, update or enhance existing skills, or learn ways to advise young protégés or students.

The 15 chapters here are divided into three parts. Part I (containing chapters 1 through 5) discusses self-awareness, self-management, and the continued development of emotional intelligence as well as the by-products of these concepts—strong character, conscious commitment, and self-discipline. These concepts are the foundation for the rest of the ideas in the book. Part II (containing chapters 6 through 11) expands the part I concepts and introduces more practices that you can adopt (or at least consider) now, including cultivating your personal brand, understanding your own leadership style, learning and rebounding from failures, creating lasting networking relationships, and mentoring. Part III (containing chapters 12 through 15) covers the nitty-gritty of pursuing internship opportunities and being an intern, mastering the interview process, successfully navigating the onboarding process in a new role, and managing your own career path.

Each chapter includes the following:

- An opening quote that represents the essence of the chapter
- Reading Points, a list of the main topics in the chapter
- Remember These, a list of the lessons learned or takeaways from the chapter

Two more features, spread throughout the book, are worth mentioning:

- *Rookie Mistakes*, a sidebar of don'ts. We (and some of our colleagues) have made mistakes—lots of them—throughout our careers. You can learn from these common mistakes to avoid making the same ones in the future and to manage your response or reaction when (never if) you make mistakes.
- *Note to My 25-Year-Old Self*, a candid reflection by top healthcare executives. Each note is a mix of advice from the leader to himself or herself at a young age, general words of wisdom to early careerists, and reminiscences of past experiences and lessons. These leaders are so generous to share their thoughts (even their regrets and mistakes) with us, and we are very thankful.

At the end of some chapters, you will find *Additional Resources and References*, which we encourage you to check out for more information. At the end of the book, we offer our lists of books that were influential to our professional development and that remain our favorites. And, new to this second edition, we include a *Frequently Asked Questions (and Answers)* section, sharing a handful of the most frequent queries we receive from our mentees and readers, and our answers to them.

One more thing: We understand the temptation to skim and skip chapters, but please don't! Here's why: We arranged the sequence of the chapters so that one lays the foundation for the next, which in turn builds on the ideas of the previous one and sets up another layer for the next. It's an interlocking chain. If you jump ahead, you may miss a detail that links one concept or strategy to another and thus lose the full message. Read this book over breakfast, on the commuter train to work or internship, or when you get tired of scrolling through your social media feed or playing

addictive games on your phone. We don't care where you do it or how long it takes you. Just please read it from beginning to end.

CONCLUSION

We consider *The Emerging Healthcare Leader: A Field Guide* the beginning of our conversation with you, not the end. Please reach out to us. We can't wait to hear about your journey.

Laurie Baedke and Natalie Lamberton