



Roxane Spitzer, PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN

## Social Responsibility, The DNA of Leadership

**P**eter Drucker, PhD, the father of modern management, believed strongly in balancing achievement of the organizational mission with providing services on behalf of the community. He had a strong value system focused on ethics, emphasizing that businesses that achieve success also have a strong commitment to society. His various books and articles stressed the importance of the involvement of both external and internal stakeholders as critical components for long-term viability. This concept aligns closely with professional nursing's mandate to provide essential services for the population. The title of this article comes from a publication of the Drucker School of Management.<sup>1</sup>

Our service community is internal and external. We work with many clinical providers, track and implement high-quality care, ensure competent clinical and service staff, and often are the engine behind the appropriate operation of the healthcare institution. In addition, the external community is also our primary customer, including patients and families who rely on us for quality and service and a higher standard of community health.

Drucker had a special place in both his heart and mind for hospitals and healthcare. He was impressed by the work of professional nurses and supportive of our emerging roles in major leadership positions. He frequently articulated the belief that the work of nurses was at the core of caring, not just for the individual, but also as advocates for the greater good.

We in healthcare are in the perfect business to do well by doing good. Central to our mission is social responsibility and the essential services we can and should provide to our community stakeholders. Delivery of patient care, our primary mission, is about caring for the whole community and requires accountability at the core of leadership practice. Providing free mammograms to

a socioeconomically disadvantaged population at risk and ensuring appropriate follow-up is one small example of meeting a community obligation.

Leadership in our more complex, interconnected world requires a strong ethical value system, one that must be at the DNA level of our belief systems and practiced every day through the work we do. Although great strides have been made, particularly in health-care technology, we still lack a systematic approach to the delivery and financing of care. We are more fragmented than ever and, therefore, more vulnerable.

As we seek to implement new systems based on healthcare reform, we must not forget our community commitment. Our obligation to society as professionals, whether as nurses or healthcare leaders, continues. We are constantly challenged to be at the forefront of addressing solutions for the health of our community and nation.

Documenting and measuring community benefits and the value they provide align directly with Drucker's principles. Successful organizations have social responsibility at the base of their leadership practices. While we struggle with the proposed impact of much needed reform and the need to restructure our organizations for more measurable efficiency and effectiveness, our success also relies on the value we provide to our community.

### Reference

1. Peter Drucker School of Management. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University. *The Flame*. 2009;Fall:7.

*Editor in Chief Roxane Spitzer, PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN, can be reached at [roxane.spitzer@gmail.com](mailto:roxane.spitzer@gmail.com).*

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