

The Path to

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

**The 5-Step Process to
Becoming a Better Leader**

By J. Bryan Bennett



**Professional
Leadership
Academy**

The Path to Professional Leadership:
The 5-Step Process to Becoming a Better Leader

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Foreword

By Chris Van Gorder

As a health care leader, I'm often asked how I got to where I am today. My usual answer is that I was fortunate – somehow, I managed to “fall up.” But that's really only part of the story.

As Professor Bennett points out in the pages that follow, leadership is a process. For me it's a process that is never-ending. And once I was able to embrace it, the door opened to my becoming who I am today and who I'll be five years from now.

Leadership is an accumulation of all you learn and put into practice along your own personal journey. In my case, falling “up,” doesn't mean there was no falling “down.” Some of my greatest leadership lessons, in fact, were learned from mistakes I made along the way or from those I observed in others. Leadership is an evolution of ideas and principles and actions, and every leadership journey is unique and personal. Your experiences and learnings will be different than mine and different from others who are reading this book.

For example, I consider myself to be a front-line leader:

- I'm energized by spending time with my front-line managers and employees, and I do so as often as possible.
- I consider nearly every moment a teaching moment and I've found the best ways to teach are through personal, experiential stories.
- I make a point of answering every email I receive, from anyone, within 24 hours. For me it's a common courtesy, and sometimes the best way to stay connected to my front-lines.

- Every morning, every day of the year, I personally curate the top news stories of the day in health care, leadership and other areas I find interesting. I share these with my management team and anyone who asks to be on the list. This gives me a reason to directly communicate every day. In turn, those on the list learn more about our industry and it sometimes leads to very valuable conversations.

These are just some elements of my own leadership style, and I live and practice them every day. But my style is not for everyone, and it may not be yours. As you go through the leadership process, it's important to apply the lessons you learn to your own individual style, strengths and principles. No matter which approach you take to leadership, it's important to be authentic to who you are.

As you embark or continue on your own leadership journey – through this book and, I'm sure, many others – I applaud you for having the courage to always take that next step. At its core, leadership is both an external and internal exercise. To be a better leader of others, we must first be brutally honest with ourselves.

The world today is full of “leaders” who fail to demonstrate the courage, honor and commitment it takes to truly lead. As Professor Bennett describes, they are leaders by title and not by action.

Thank you for daring to be different.

Chris Van Gorder
President and CEO
Scripps Health