

Marshall Hicks, MD, tells a story about the Leadership Experience

Dr. Hicks joined the faculty of Diagnostic Radiology in 1998. He served as department chair from 2007-2012 and as President ad interim from 2016-2017. In an interview conducted in 2019, he talks about the importance of support for leaders.



The Value of Coaching and Support Networks

For me, the beginning of the leadership journey was where I began to realize how little I knew about it. I had taken some classes with the American College of Physician Executives. At the end of the day, I think some of the most valuable lessons that I've learned have been through the coaching experience. It's nice to be able to talk things through in the moment, because that's how life happens. You can go to classes, you can prepare, you can think about it, but when something really happens to you, you need to talk something through to make sure. Rarely do things happen emergently in leadership. People will try to create urgencies or emergencies, but most the time you have time to talk it through and think it through, but it's not like you can wait for your next class two months from now. You want to be able to talk it through and make sure that you're considering the right things and making the right decision, and a coach can help talk you through that and help you check into that self-awareness on it.

Also, the network that we've tried to build throughout the institution is helpful too. Some of my closest colleagues are ones that I met in the FLA or that I've met along the way here in different committees or classes, and those are people you can seek advice from and talk things through. I don't think we do that as much as we could. I do sense some hesitation with people being entirely open. They don't want confidentialities to be breached. I think also you're vulnerable and having somebody that you've worked with or trusted is helpful. I've tried to do that as I've gotten further in my career, sometimes just reach out to people proactively that I see are emerging leaders, have lunch with them or talk to them and try to develop a relationship where they feel like if they need to talk to somebody there's somebody they can talk to, talk something through. It's really trying to prevent missteps or things. Sometimes those are hard --to go back-- particularly when they get emotional and new relationships can be damaged. It's hard, leadership is hard.

About This Content

This interview clip was taken from an in-depth interview conducted for the Making Cancer History Voices Oral History Project. This ongoing project currently contains almost 500 interview hours with MD Anderson institution builders.

The transcript has been edited from the original.

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Interview link: <http://mdanderson.libguides.com/HicksM>

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