

Leading the change with conviction

Saurabh Tripathi looks for leaders who are adaptable

A C-Suite Conversation with

Saurabh Tripathi

SVP and Chief Financial Officer, Fresenius Kidney Care



The Companies of MPI



Tripathi also admires self-made entrepreneurs such as Richard Branson and Mark Cuban.

“I love Branson’s philosophy that, ‘Once a changemaker, always a changemaker – but only a few swim against the tide,’” Tripathi says. “Mark Cuban started as a bartender then launched his own company. I have learned a lot from his program, ‘Shark Tank,’ in terms of what questions to ask people. He’s very insightful.”

Many leaders like Tripathi find it important to ask questions as they lead and mentor their teams. Some of this can be formalized

in leadership development and personality assessment programs. The best leaders encourage their team to reflect on questions like:

- What are my strengths and challenges?
- How can I champion my organization’s mission and vision?
- How do I help my teammates develop as leaders?
- How do I advance the goals of the enterprise and not merely my own department?

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Saurabh Tripathi is a student of leadership.

“I’m an absolutely voracious reader, and I spend a lot of time reading about leaders and how they make decisions,” says Saurabh Tripathi, senior vice president and chief financial officer at Fresenius Kidney Care. Saurabh’s innovations earned him honors from Modern Healthcare as one of their Executives to Watch in the Top 25 Minority Executives in Healthcare program.

“Jack Welch, the former GE chairman, is my icon. When I was at GE Healthcare, he was about to retire, and I was able to participate in a number of the leadership programs where he would speak.”

EXECUTIVE’S TOOLKIT: Encouraging diverse talent

Saurabh Tripathi says he has been fortunate to have not experienced discrimination throughout his career, but he knows many executives who have.

That is why he is intentional about coaching and mentoring younger colleagues to encourage ethnically and gender-diverse executives to aspire to higher roles in his organization.

“One thing I’ve noticed,” he says, “is that minority populations may not be as willing to raise their hand

and say, ‘I’m ready for the next role.’ There is a tendency to think, ‘I am just going to put my head down and work hard.’”

“So, I am coaching them to let the organization know they are ready for the next opportunity. Obviously, there is a balance and you have to make sure you are performing well in your current role. But broadcast your brand and network so it is easier for the organization to notice you and promote you.”

Leaders as change agents

Although his title reflects his financial expertise, Tripathi (who is a Six Sigma black belt) provides expert operational guidance to Fresenius Kidney Care, where his investment decisions to spend about \$500 million in building new dialysis clinics has led to \$10 billion in sales. This background, coupled with a desire to make a difference in people's lives, led him to leave his path as an electrical engineer and return to school to earn an MBA.

"As an organization, the number one thing we have to keep in mind is our patients," he says. "We want good clinical outcomes in a cost-efficient manner for our patients. That's what we try to do. My message to our people is that if we do the right thing for the patient, the rest will fall into place. And that is working for us."

The leader must be a sound change agent, says Tripathi, considering the wave of mergers and acquisitions that has been reshaping the health world, including his own company.

In terms of recruiting and retaining talent, he says executives need to be adaptable. "When I look for new leaders, I find that people who embrace change are the ones who are most successful in a new environment."

Leadership consultants agree that adaptability is a key litmus test for executives. Indeed, some would argue that adaptability is one of the few competitive advantages that exist in the marketplace anymore. Is your organization streamlined, nimble and ready to embrace change, or is it more difficult to turn and pivot?

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Tripathi a 'relentless leader' who nurtures and advocates for his teams

Bill Valle, the CEO of Fresenius Medical Care North America (FMCNA), explains the impact that Tripathi has made on Fresenius Kidney Care's finances – and its team members.



Bill Valle

Q *In the rapidly changing healthcare climate, what are the key traits needed in today's leaders? How does Saurabh embody that?*

A In today's ever-changing healthcare environment, leaders need to be transformative—they need to re-envision and reshape the way things are done. Saurabh was a key player in the charge to reimagine the way we deliver dialysis to our existing patients and those who will undergo dialysis in the future, advancing the adoption of home dialysis.

By making bold moves to redefine the current model of life-sustaining dialysis delivery, Saurabh's work will enable FMCNA to dramatically and positively change the face of the dialysis treatment landscape for many years to come. It's impossible to measure the positive impact this may have for the patient population and the healthcare industry – suffice to say, it could be transformative.

It's imperative to never lose sight of who you are working for. In our case, that's always the patient. With so many shifts in the healthcare space, it's easy to get mired in policy, regulation and numbers. But, behind each of those numbers is a patient and a family, and our thoughts and actions need to always be on the patient. Saurabh is a relentless leader, nurturing his teams and advocating for them to understand why their day-to-day work is so important to our patients' lives. He takes every step possible to understand our patients, their struggles and their needs, and in doing so, he is instilling that patient-first mindset among his teams.

Q *What is necessary to ensure that diversity in leadership is a best practice in healthcare organizations? What has worked for your organization?*

A Recognizing the importance of and taking action toward having the best and the brightest people in leadership positions in healthcare organizations is something that has to come from the top. It needs to be driven by organizations' boards and CEOs – and embraced by fellow leadership. In my brief time as CEO of FMCNA, this is something I have focused on. We as a company are working to become more diverse overall so we can benefit from different points of view and experiences. Saurabh has been a great advocate in these efforts.

Focusing the leadership team

In selecting his own leadership team, Tripathi is purposeful and detail-oriented, as one might expect from a former engineer.

“The first thing I look for is domain expertise and perspective,” he says. “I look not just for functional leadership but for good business partners. We need to be able to go to the CEO with financial recommendations and understand how and why we are going to finance a business deal.”

The second element, he says, is an intangible that is crucial: passion.

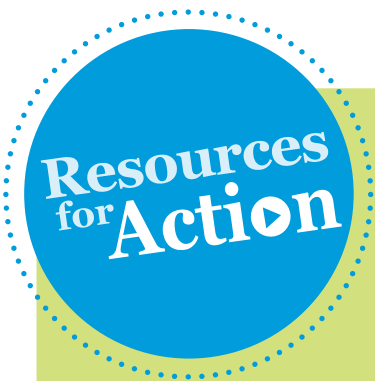
“If people have passion and purpose, they are very easy to engage, because they believe in the mission. If a true leader is engaged, it is amazing what an organization can do.”

Alignment and cohesion on a leadership team can be challenging in healthcare, where opportunity is often plentiful for leaders and thus there is a steady stream of change. Services like executive

team performance and executive installation help organizations stay focused and acclimate new leaders to their peers.

It’s also important to manage up to your supervisor, Tripathi says.

“The number one thing is building a relationship of trust,” he says. “Once we establish that bridge of trust, and your supervisor can use you as a sounding board, that relationship should work very well. That’s what I coach my people to do as quickly as possible.” **MPI**



ARTICLE: Executive Team Performance

Want better team performance? Check out this article to jump-start your plan for better team cohesiveness.

From assessing individual leaders to evaluating culture and aligning with organizational goals, the key to developing a strong executive leadership team doesn’t have to be a mystery or a guessing game. Unlocking these strengths is complex, but having a solid plan with authentic, meaningful metrics is critical.

5 steps to unlocking your team’s potential:

1. Assessment and awareness
2. Facilitated development
3. Alignment and measurement
4. Refinement
5. Action planning and execution

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