

Forge

**SHAPING
LEADERSHIP
CRAFTING
IMPACT:**

ARTICLES THAT SERVE
AS A BLUEPRINT FOR
BUSINESS LEADERS
SEEKING TO BUILD
RESILIENT
ORGANIZATIONS
CAPABLE OF THRIVING
IN DYNAMIC
ENVIRONMENTS.



PHYSICIAN IS IN YOUR DNA.
DON'T LET LEADERSHIP
FATIGUE DERAIL THE
EVOLUTION OF YOUR CAREER

HELXIXMD WAS BUILT FOR
THIS!

HelixMD

From the clinic to the C-Suite™

Editors Notes

OF GAFFES, GRACE, AND GRATITUDE

Shaping leadership.

Crafting impact.



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www.archetypelearningsolutions.com

Leadership, Engagement, Learning,
Recovery.



Danielle Lord, PhD | Principal
Archetype Learning Solutions

Leadership is rarely a straight, polished line. It is a collection of gaffes we would love to edit out, moments of grace we extend to ourselves and others, and the steady practice of gratitude that keeps us grounded. As leaders, our mistakes are often public and consequential, but they are also invitations: to repair, to listen more deeply, and to realign with what matters most.

The gaffe: Last month's article introducing HelixMD was written by my lovely VA Bili, all the way in Nigeria, and I failed to give her credit. As an academic researcher, that's an unmistakable gaff! As a human, it cuts even deeper realizing that through all her support, I failed to give her the gratitude that she so deserves.

My gratitude: to you Bili, expressing my great appreciation in all you do and what you have done to bring HelixMD to life.

This edition of Forge explores how we can normalize missteps without normalizing harm, how we can lead with both accountability and compassion, and how gratitude can become more than a feeling, it can become a leadership practice. My hope is that these pages remind all of us that humanity is not a liability in leadership; it is the very material we forge everyday into real impact for those in our care.

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Forge Magazine,
part of Archetype
Learning Solutions

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Join myself and Douglass Brown of Manage to Retain for a live webinar! Link to register. Find the link to the live webinar.

Announcing...HelixMD!

Leadership support for aspiring and recovering physician leaders

HelixMD delivers evidence-based leadership development and physician wellness solutions that empower healthcare organizations to reduce burnout, elevate team performance, and sustain physician engagement. Through expertly crafted assessments, actionable learning modules, and data-driven support, HelixMD streamlines leadership pathways and fosters a culture of well-being, helping clients achieve better outcomes for physicians, patients, and the organization overall.

Discover how HelixMD can transform your physician leadership journey, visit our site now to explore groundbreaking wellness tools, proven development strategies, and practical resources for healthcare organizations. Ready to drive real change? Check out HelixMD today!

Experience transformative physician leadership and wellness support with HelixMD, your gateway to evidence-based assessments, guided learning modules, and powerful analytics designed for healthcare organizations. Ready to elevate your team and drive real change? Visit HelixMD now to explore resources, request a demo, or connect for a personalized introduction.

My work in this specific area began in 2011, when I accepted the challenge by John Koster, MD CEO & President of Providence Health System a 75,000 employee system operating in five states. Dr. Koster's vision was to return healthcare operations to physicians. Knowing that they were often ill-prepared to take that role, I gladly accepted the challenge. Continues on p. 5

HelixMD



Being a physician was a life long dream, you could say its in your DNA. At the intersection of clinician and leader is HelixMD. Preparing future physicians for leadership roles, helping existing physician leaders navigate leadership fatigue. Get back to your roots with our strategies to help you transition from the clinic to the c-suite.

Physician is in your DNA: don't let leadership fatigue derail your career evolution

HelixMD

Taking on the system level role of creating, developing, and managing physician leadership was a huge privilege. As a graduate level professor, I used the same concepts of adult education to design a two-year program that included mentorship and four of the most difficult leadership competencies to develop as well as the most needed in the rapidly changing healthcare landscape. This approach was almost immediately criticized. “you’re insulting really smart people,” “how dare you make physicians go through a two-year program,” “just give them a book, they’ll figure it out,” was just a few of the things I heard. “You need to re-design the program was a constant refrain. As a researcher, I decided to find out for myself, thus my first research project with Larry Schecter, MD - general surgeon turned coach - began. Results were not only surprising, they were disheartening.

Turns out the physicians are people too

What do I mean by this statement? There are quite a few assumptions and allusivity that surround physicians. These assumptions have assigned hardships and restrictions, which hinder their development needs. They are often placed on a pedestal within healthcare, assuming that because they have a medical degree, they’re somehow immune to the complexity of development. This white paper examines results of the research with physicians as they navigated the difficulty of adult learning amidst the opacity of leadership and the business of healthcare. Research with this group of physicians indicated strongly that their development needs are no different than anyone else’s. In fact, as leadership is a relationship-based activity, it’s possible that physicians may need even more time to develop these skills than their business counterparts.

Physicians should be afforded the same developmental opportunities

This research was borne from my desire to serve both aspiring physician leaders with a better developmental experience and to be an effective steward of healthcare dollars. My research partner, Larry Schecter, MD – clinician turned leader and leadership coach, provided thoughtful guidance helping me better understand the challenges of medical school, residency, and practice. The white paper is intended for HR or OD professionals seeking to understand the needs of any aspiring leader.

The white papers as well as the two research studies are available at:

<https://www.archetypelearningsolutions.com/academic-research>

Our framework

Our research (Lord, Kodama, & Granzotti, 2025; Lord & Schecter, 2016) has led us to conclude that physician leadership fatigue is the result of three co-morbidities represented here -



HelixMD

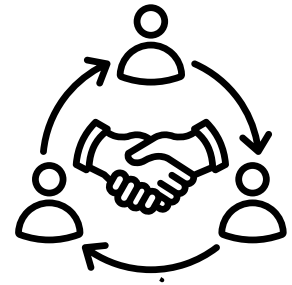


Leadership Support for
aspiring and recovering
physician leaders

**When support is absent, the emotional weight compounds:
role confusion → identity conflict → isolation → moral distress →
exhaustion.**

It's a pattern so predictable that we built HelixMD to disrupt it.

Why leaders still think recruiting will fix a retention problem



An executive said to me recently, “I still have money in my recruiting budget, why should I care about retention?”

That one sentence perfectly captures the disconnect driving today’s workforce crisis. For decades, organizations have been taught, often by large consulting firms founded on scientific management, that people are interchangeable parts and performance problems can be solved by “better talent” and tighter controls. The unspoken assumption is simple: if someone leaves, just hire someone new. If engagement drops, send managers to a training. If turnover spikes, call recruiting.

Meanwhile, the data are telling us a very different story.

Across sectors, burnout, stress, and mental health–related leaves have increased dramatically, with one analysis showing mental health leaves up more than 300 percent since 2017. In large workforce studies, over 70 percent of employees report at least some burnout symptoms, and higher burnout is strongly associated with intent to leave. At the same time, trust in managers has plummeted, from 46 percent in 2022 to 29 percent in 2024 in one global leadership report, signaling a steep erosion in the relationships that hold organizations together.

It is not a recruiting problem. It is a human problem.

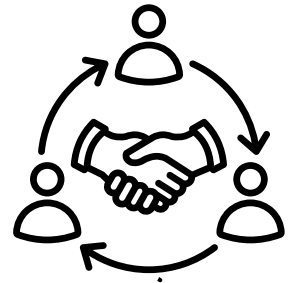
The high-cost of turnover:

Turnover is often framed as an HR metric, but it is fundamentally a financial, operational, and HUMAN issue. In U.S. organizations, recent estimates suggest employers spent roughly 900 billion dollars replacing people who quit in a single year. In healthcare, one national retention report pegs the cost of a single bedside RN departure at over 60,000 dollars, which means a 300-bed hospital with 400 nurses and 30 percent turnover is spending more than 7.3 million dollars annually just on nurse replacement.

Even a modest reduction in turnover produces meaningful savings. A five-percentage-point drop in nurse turnover can translate to more than 1.2 million dollars in avoided cost each year for that same hospital. Those dollars are often quietly leaking out at the same time leaders are approving new requisitions and expanding recruiting contracts.

What gets lost in the spreadsheets is the human reality underneath those numbers: exhaustion, eroded trust, unresolved conflict, and managers stuck between pressure from above and pain from below.

To recruit or retain?



When scientific management outlives its usefulness

Many of our current leadership habits are still shaped by early 20th-century scientific management, built on time, task, and productivity. That tradition was powerful for standardizing work, but it largely ignored how humans actually behave. As early as the Hawthorne studies in the 1920s, researchers showed that relationships, attention, and social context significantly influenced performance. Industrial/organizational psychology emerged to help organizations understand those dynamics, yet the “people as parts” mindset never really went away. Big consulting reinforced this emphasis on outputs and efficiency, often reducing complex human systems to slide decks and benchmarks. The result? We still talk about people as “resources” to be optimized while cutting the very practices, learning together, coaching, one-to-one conversations, that build trust and engagement.

When profits consistently win out over people, leaders unintentionally starve the relational infrastructure that makes performance sustainable.

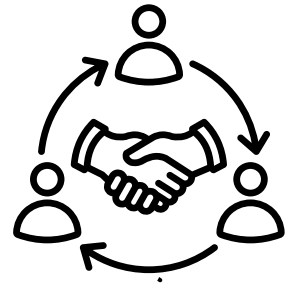
Why managers are squeezed - and disengaging

Managers sit at the painful intersection of shifting workforce expectations, rising complexity, and legacy mindsets about control. They are asked to deliver results, absorb change, and support increasingly distressed teams, often with little preparation or development.

Recent data show that as many as 75 percent of managers now report some level of disengagement. When managers disengage, their teams follow. Gallup’s research has long shown that managers account for roughly 70 percent of the variance in team engagement, a disengaged manager is, almost by definition, a disengaged team.

Under chronic stress, many managers default to punitive behaviors: writing people up instead of coaching, clamping down on flexibility, or retreating into email rather than having difficult conversations. From the outside, this can look like ego or indifference. From the inside, it is often a nervous system trying to survive. As engagement drops and conflict rises, organizations are quick to label individuals as “problems” rather than asking what conditions are driving those behaviors. People do not have to leave the organization to leave the organization; they can check out emotionally while still taking up a seat.

To recruit or retain?



Belonging and psychological safety: not “soft,” but predictive

If we step away from consultant decks and look at current peer-reviewed research, two themes emerge as powerful predictors of whether people stay: belonging and psychological safety.

In a 2025 national study of more than 38,000 public health professionals, researchers found that every one-unit increase in agreement with the statement “I feel a sense of belonging at my organization” was associated with a 56 percent decrease in the odds of intending to leave. The same study found that higher burnout more than doubled the likelihood that employees planned to exit.

Another recent analysis on psychological safety found that employees in high-safety environments were far less likely to consider leaving than those in low-safety settings, and that the effect was even stronger for historically marginalized groups. Psychological safety in these studies is not about being “nice”; it is about being able to speak up, ask questions, and admit mistakes without fear of humiliation or punishment.

These are not abstract culture concepts. They are measurable conditions with clear, quantifiable links to retention and performance.

Why recruiting can't fix what relationships break

When leaders respond to turnover by doubling down on recruiting, they are treating a symptom, not a cause. Recruiting can bring people through the door. It cannot make them stay.

To stay or go - or worse:

People stay when:

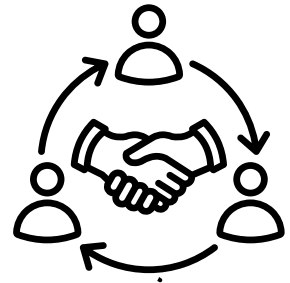
- Their day-to-day experience aligns with their values and needs
- They feel seen, heard, and valued by their manager and peers
- They trust that feedback is fair and development is possible
- They experience some degree of autonomy, purpose, and growth

People leave when:

- Work becomes a chronic source of stress and exhaustion
- Words like “soon” or “later” mask unclear expectations and erode trust
- Conflict festers because no one has the skills or safety to address it
- They conclude that their needs will not be met here, no matter how hard they try

These patterns show up in every sector, from healthcare to tech to public service. They are human responses, not character flaws.

To recruit or retain?



A different question for leaders:

The more useful question for leaders is not, “Do we have enough in the recruiting budget?” but: “What is it like to work here on an ordinary Tuesday, and would I stay, given that reality?” Answering that question honestly requires looking beyond engagement scores and dashboards. It means paying attention to one-to-ones, the quality of team conversations, how conflict is handled, and whether managers are being equipped rather than blamed. It also requires the humility to accept that many of our inherited management practices, over-indexing on task, treating training as a checkbox, neglecting relationships, are part of the problem, not the solution.

An invitation to rethink retention:

Retention is not a mystery, and it is not a pure function of the labor market. We know more than enough from both practice and research to act differently.

If you are a leader or manager who is tired of pretending that another recruiting push will fix a culture problem, this is your invitation to step into a different conversation.

In our recent 90-minute session, *Improve Workforce Issues to Reduce Organization Impacts*, Douglas and I explored:

- What current research actually says about burnout, belonging, and turnover
- Why managerial complacency is often a stress response, and what to do about it
- How everyday interactions, not just programs, shape engagement and trust
- Practical steps leaders can take now to stop hiring their way out of preventable losses

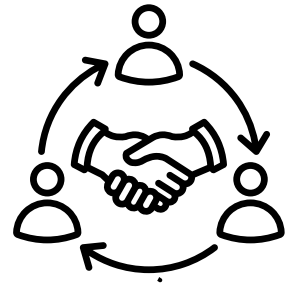
Not as a theoretical exercise, but as a path back to organizations where people, and performance, can thrive side by side.

If the old playbook was “replace the person,” the new one is this: repair the conditions.

**MISSED THE LIVE
WEBINAR? YOU CAN FIND
IT HERE:**

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/EXVS6W6ZQZA](https://youtu.be/exvs6w6zqza)

To recruit or retain?



“I STILL HAVE MONEY IN MY RECRUITING BUDGET-WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT RETENTION?”

Ready for retention in 2026? Here are some fun ideas and we’d love to hear from you!

1. Reflect:

- “Take five minutes this week to ask yourself: What is it like to work here on an ordinary Tuesday, and would I stay, given that reality? Capture your honest answer, then choose one conversation you will have as a result.”

2. Quick pulse with their team

- Invite readers to ask their team one simple question in the next week:
 - “What is one small change that would make it easier for you to stay and do your best work here?”
 - Suggest they share one thing they heard and one action they will take in the workshop or in a follow-up note.

3. Belonging and safety micro-audit

- Offer a tiny, doable audit: “Rate, on a 1–5 scale, how strongly your team would agree with these statements: I feel like I belong here and I can speak up about problems without fear. Where are you today, and what is one step you’ll take to move that score by even half a point?”

4. Invite stories or questions

- Add a line such as: “Have a story about trying to ‘recruit your way out’ of a culture problem, or turning it around? I’d love to hear it.” Then direct them to reply to the newsletter, a survey link, or a brief form connected to the session registration.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Our February strategy (strategy #3) becoming VAP

Let's dispel the myth that kindness and business are mutually exclusive. Being vulnerable, authentic, and present as a leader is essential—not only for building trust, but also for driving engagement, innovation, and sustained performance. While traditional business culture has often equated leadership with unwavering confidence and emotional distance, research and real-world experience show that the opposite is true: vulnerability, authenticity, and presence are powerful leadership assets.

Why Vulnerability, Authenticity, and Presence Matter in Leadership

1. Builds Trust and Connection

Vulnerability—being open about your strengths, weaknesses, and even mistakes—signals to your team that you are human and approachable. This openness fosters genuine trust and deeper connections, making it safe for others to share ideas, concerns, and feedback without fear of judgment or reprisal.

Authenticity—showing up as your true self—means aligning your words and actions with your values and integrity. Teams are quick to spot inauthenticity, and when leaders are genuine, employees are more likely to feel psychologically safe, engaged, and committed.

2. Drives Innovation and Engagement

Leaders who are vulnerable and authentic create environments where people feel safe to take risks, share creative ideas, and learn from mistakes. This culture of psychological safety is a key driver of innovation and continuous improvement.

When leaders are present—actively listening, engaging in the moment, and showing genuine interest—team members feel valued and understood. This boosts morale, motivation, and the willingness to contribute.

3. Enhances Communication and Empathy

Vulnerable leaders communicate more openly, which improves clarity and reduces misunderstandings. They are also more empathetic, recognizing and responding to the challenges their teams face, which fosters a culture of compassion and mutual support.

4. Increases Leadership Effectiveness

Authentic and present leaders are better equipped to make thoughtful, informed decisions because they are attuned to the needs and perspectives of those around them.



***Want more ways to retain?
...best of all, its free!***

Our Archetype Engagement Blueprint is a powerful toolkit that has all 12 strategies in one complete package. You'll find strategy templates, tools, and a variety of resources to address all 12 of our strategies:

1. Create a sense of community
2. "About Me" posters
3. Becoming VAP: Vulnerable, Authentic, & Present
4. Re-recruit!
5. The daily DOSE
6. Recognition Recipe Cards
7. Perspective taking
8. Gratitude
9. Rounding
10. One to ones
11. Thank you notes
12. Meetings

These are not in any order, but we recognize that some, like becoming VAP, can feel more challenging than others. If vulnerability, authenticity, and presence are more considered a challenge, starting with and perfecting some of the others, will automatically build your VAP muscles!

Never underestimate the creativity of a disengaged team member!



COMPASSION

February often brings attention to love, but I like to think of this month as an invitation to begin with the most important relationship of all: the one we have with ourselves.

In the quiet of winter, there is space to soften. To listen inward. To offer ourselves compassion instead of criticism. To come home, not by doing more, but by being present with what is.

This month, I invite you to practice heart-centered mindfulness and gentle self-care. Not as an indulgence, but as a foundation.

Mindfully yours,
~Anika



Compassion is not weakness, it is strength with warmth.



Our COMPASS Mindfulness coach: Anika Kilx

Anika's Monthly Mindful Practice: the self-compassion pause

Try this short practice whenever you feel stress, overwhelm, or self-judgment:

1. Pause and place a hand over your heart.
2. Breathe slowly, just as you are.
3. Silently say:
 - This is a moment of difficulty.
 - Difficulty is part of being human.
 - May I be kind to myself right now.
4. Stay for three breaths, letting softness return

Connect with Anika:

<https://www.halsacoaching.com/book-online>

Forge contributors



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Douglas sets his sights on helping managers and executives understand the benefits of employee retention through the lens that comes with excessive turnover and loss of employee engagement.

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Helping physicians and healthcare leaders navigate the real-world demands of leadership, burnout, risk, role strain and so much more. Christopher is a certified positive psychology coach.

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COMPASS



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Mindfulness coach Anika brings her wealth of knowledge combined with compassion and empathy to her coaching practice Halsa Coaching. Contact Anika: <https://www.halsacoaching.com/book-online>

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Tracy Cram Perkins

Tracy has one of the most read books including practical advice through the lived experience of caring for her father as he battled dementia and the long term care environment. You can find her book and live show at: USA Global TV & Radio

Annie Frisbie

Philanthropist, leader, and amazing individual. More on Annie next month!

Coming soon!
MasterHERmind

Solving the workforce puzzle: How retention, engagement, and manager effectiveness drive financial & operational success

A LIVE WEBINAR WITH
DANIELLE LORD &
DOUGLAS BROWN OF
MANAGE2RETAIN



In case you missed it:

Watch on YouTube!

<https://youtu.be/exvS6W6ZqZA>



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We merge research and business blending
the art and science of leadership and
bringing your business cutting edge
solutions.



FORGE

Shaping Leadership | Crafting Impact



ARTICLES THAT SERVE AS A BLUEPRINT FOR BUSINESS LEADERS SEEKING TO BUILD RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS CAPABLE OF THRIVING IN DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENTS.