

EDITORIAL

The echo we leave: an invitation for leaderful practice

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The scenario

Working with this team leader has been a nightmare since day ONE.

You explain but they don't listen, you speak and they interrupt, they question your ethics, your background, your competence, your leadership.

It seems they have a problem with everything you say and do. And when you leave the room, you can hear them venting. You dread every moment.

And now ... they have just stopped by your office to tell you that they've found another job.

They're leaving.

Thank goodness. You'll never see them again.

You watch them packing up.

And you start to think ... What kind of echo am I leaving here?

So, you pick up the phone ... and call them.

If you are a simulation professional, you are a leader, title or no title. This work involves innovation, creativity, adaptability, collaborative problem solving, shared decision-making and sophisticated communication skills. Simulation professionals design and deliver education across health professions that value and can bring to life respectful, compassionate, collaborative and authentic leadership practice in the service of relationship-centred care.

With every conversation, every meeting, every encounter with our colleagues, noticing what others are feeling and thinking invites us as leaders to consider the question: what is the echo we want to leave?

The 'central conceit' that there will always be time to achieve, aspire and resolve in our leadership roles allows for a convenient lull in our professional thinking. This future-focused thinking can hold one in a planning, visioning and next-steps mindset.

Our moment-to-moment presence, attention and action have an equally important hold on working atmosphere and relationships. The idea that there is no time to waste.

The landscape of simulation-based education affords a compelling 'leaderful' opportunity to explore and discover in real time how one's words and actions echo, during ... and often long after a consequential interaction.

Submission Date: 28 April 2025

Accepted Date: 28 July 2025

Published Date: 03 September 2025

The invitation here is to consider the echo we leave behind ... as our day-to-day living legacy. Consider the echo we leave, akin to the 'whoosh' or the feeling we leave behind in a room. Based on what we do or say, are people left feeling demoralized and confused, or valued and inspired? Our echo lingers after every encounter.

Our title refers to 'leaderful' practice, alluding to a movement in the leadership field that focuses on leadership as practice (L-A-P) [1]. Raelin argues that leaderful practice is, at its core, collaborative, compassionate, concurrent (many can lead at the same time) and collective. It looks for inspiration in 'its music and activity rather than in the traits and heroics of individual actors and is concerned far more with where, how and why leadership work is being organized and accomplished than about *who* is offering visions for others to do the work' [1].

The echo we leave as leaders is a critical question and invitation for self-discovery.

If principles of compassion and collaboration are foundational to developing and maintaining strong leadership practice, it behooves us to understand and, more importantly, *embody* the type of leaderful practice in which we may want to engage. What tenets shape our own definition and practice of leadership? Leaderful practice may call upon the echo we leave in democratic concert with all involved parties.

Does the echo we leave honour our core values, beliefs and strengths?

'Leaderful practice is unrepentant in advocating distinctively democratic values' [1]. Raelin describes the ironic characterization between a wholly supportive and supported team as leaderless, when in fact, with everyone fully participating collectively and concurrently in leadership, it is leaderful [1].

He makes a clear distinction for leaderful practice based on democratic ideas and community to co-creation, working interdependently in its development [1].

The generosity and willingness required in giving up one's self-importance align with leaderful practice against other more traditional leadership paradigms. A resonant echo can be created with shared collaborative participation without expectation for recognition.

We live in a series of 'first' and 'lasts'; the first time we say hello, acknowledge a mistake, forge a connection, the last time we express admiration or say goodbye.

Navigating a healthcare system that is becoming increasingly volatile, uncertain and ambiguous is a reality for everyone in health care, including educators who can effectively guide healthcare professionals in this vexed time [2]. Simulation professionals are on the front lines, designing and delivering real-world learning that contributes to improved patient outcomes and a stronger healthcare environment.

Emerging leaders across many professions may find themselves unprepared without a full appreciation for the nature of the work ahead. Experienced leaders can be left feeling isolated and burdened by unexpected and shifting responsibilities. In the midst of a sea of leadership approaches, frameworks and tools, how do we align our personal and professional values, day-to-day decision-making and relationship building; in ways that leave an enduring echo with others?

We are inviting a leadership perspective that highlights not only what we do but who we are as leaders.

As we pick up the phone and call, what is the 'whoosh' we will leave? What is the echo that will reverberate in our leadership legacy? How can we flatten the leadership hierarchy and work together in the service of creating a richer outcome?

This is a personal and professional invitation for the echo you leave within the tenets of leaderful practice.

A warrior must learn to make every act count, since s/he is going to be here in this world for only a short while, in fact, too short for witnessing all the marvels of it [3].

This call to action is for all of us to imagine every action or gesture as perhaps the last echo we will leave with others. An in-the-moment opportunity to seize with friends, colleagues, partners ... to act with the utmost integrity ... to give the best of ourselves without the luxury of time to repair, fix or be better next time.

The echo we all leave ... with no time to waste.

Declarations

Authors' contribution

All authors contributed equally to the article

Funding

None declared.

Availability of data and materials

None declared.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

None declared.

Competing interests

The authors all declare no conflicts of interest.

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