The AHA Physician Alliance regularly convenes its Physician Leadership Circle to explore issues of relevance to senior physician executives. The group recently discussed the complicated and progressive roles of physician leaders, addressing the attitudes and strategies that empower effective leaders – and the people they lead. Below are three essential takeaways:

**Leadership is more than action, it’s a mindset.**
Systems aren’t just looking to CMOs and other high profile positions for leadership, they’re seeking leaders at every level to influence their microcosm and align teams to be more effective. Success is a moving target, and often it’s the lessons learned through setbacks that empower people to translate risk into opportunity. In leadership, there is room to try things and fail but the work you do today may not come to fruition for months or years – a stark contrast to clinical care thinking. Embracing this mindset and timeline allows physician leaders to cultivate innovation in every aspect of care.

**Lead by example (even when you don’t think you’re leading).**
By modeling expectations and charting a path forward, physicians – including those not formally in leadership roles – initiate progress through their own actions and inspire others to do the same. Team members tend to look to clinicians and adjust behaviors accordingly. As such, leadership theories are useful, but active learning and advancing are the real keys to elevating any standard.

**Leaders don’t win, they evolve.**
Leadership isn’t about being the best or proving you’re right – it’s about pushing boundaries and making the impossible possible. Physician leaders never cross the finish line – they set the pace and find strategies to help their team perform better every day.

**Remember, there is always tomorrow.**
Administrative challenges take collaboration, compromise and rarely get solved by the end of the work day. Understanding the incremental approach of change management and leadership, while developing the discipline to leave work “at work” requires a different mindset.

Physician leaders affiliated with AHA member organizations are invited to be part of these Leadership Circle events. Please email physicianalliance@aha.org to find out more about upcoming events and be part of this exclusive group. Visit www.aha.org/physicians for more information, tools and resources from the AHA Physician Alliance.