

FROM DATA TO DIALOGUE

When Clinical Expertise Meets Leadership Reality

“I thought leadership meant having all the answers. Chris helped me see that real leadership is creating space where everyone’s wisdom can serve our patients better than any one person’s expertise ever could.”

— Dr. S, Cardiologist and Director of Quality and Innovation, regional health system



THE CHALLENGE

“After two decades in clinical practice, I had the technical stuff down: data analysis, protocols, quality metrics. But when I moved into senior leadership, I kept hitting the same wall.

The pattern that wasn’t working:

- Present evidence-based solutions
- Encounter pushback from the team
- Double down on clinical expertise and get defensive

I was trapped in a cycle where the harder I pushed data, the more resistance I faced. The breaking point came during a heated meeting about a new quality protocol when I realized I was creating exactly the dysfunction I was trying to eliminate. My clinical strengths had become leadership limitations. ”



THE WORK WITH CHRIS

“Chris didn’t try to “fix” my leadership style. Instead, he helped me see the patterns I was unconsciously perpetuating. When I’d describe frustrating team interactions, he’d ask, *“And where were you in all this?”*, pointing out that I was the X-variable in the equation.

The foundation work involved:

- Learning to listen without immediately formulating rebuttals
- Addressing the anxiety that drove my defensiveness
- Developing new language for difficult conversations

The first real shift happened when I started asking questions before offering solutions. This created space for team members to contribute their expertise instead of just agreeing with my predetermined conclusions.



The deeper work was recognizing when I was operating from an ego need to be recognized versus genuine service to our patients. Chris warned this would be uncomfortable—but each awkward moment became a learning opportunity that clinical training never prepared me for.”

THE TRANSFORMATION

“When I stopped needing to be the Expert-Achiever in every situation, my team started sharing insights I never would have considered. A nurse practitioner who used to be quiet in meetings now leads our patient experience initiatives with real confidence.

What actually changed:

- Interdisciplinary meetings shifted from draining to energizing
- People became comfortable admitting when they needed help
- We moved from proving individual competence to collective problem-solving

The fundamental reframe: Instead of asking “What demonstrates *our achievement?*” we started asking “What would best serve *our patients?*” When I became willing to focus on outcomes, not personal credit, my team became confident enough to innovate collaboratively.”



THE RESULTS

“Now I navigate difficult conversations with calm presence instead of defensive reactions. Work feels meaningful rather than stressful and ego-driven.

The organizational impact:

- Our department gained system-wide recognition as a place people want to work
- Other physicians seek our team’s input on creating collaborative cultures
- We’re delivering improved patient outcomes while everyone contributes meaningfully

The most surprising discovery: You cannot create safety for others while operating from your own fear and need for control. The internal work I did to manage my anxiety about winning the day and getting the credit kept our focus on better outcomes for our patients. And that shift gave my team permission to be creative and collaborative.

Chris doesn't just listen, he challenges you to turn insights into actual plans and pushes you beyond what feels comfortable until new approaches become second nature. That's what made the difference. ”



Lead yourself well. Serve great purposes

Chris Thyberg, Founder and Principal Coach, The Serving Way

✉ Chris.Thyberg@TheServingWay.com

☎ +1 917.535.6832

🌐 TheServingWay.com



grow as a
leader 