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This is an excerpt from a 2015 interview conducted by Dan Nielsen, founder & CEO of America's Healthcare Leaders (AHL) featuring:

John G. Self

Founder & president of JohnGSelf + Partners, Inc. – Dallas, Texas

Dan Nielsen: Welcome to America's Healthcare Leaders, I'm Dan Nielsen. We have the honor of having John Self, who is the founding member of the firm John Self and Partners. John is an executive search consultant, one of the best in the country. John I'd like to ask you this question. **Based on your extensive experience, what are 5 of the most important keys to a successful career in leadership in healthcare?**

John Self: Wow. Such a great question, I think it's such an important question. **First of all** you've got to have the core values. You've got to have integrity, you've got to be willing to do the right thing, even when no one is looking. You have to be honest. You have to be sincere, in other words you have to be authentic. You have to be consistent with that authenticity. Employees are extraordinarily sophisticated machines, they will pick up on it in a New York flash if you're not doing those things.

I think **the second thing** you need to do in healthcare today is you have to care about the patients. Not because they're revenue, but because when we go into healthcare, it's to take care of people. Getting a job running a hospital or health network or health system is not a right, it's a privilege. It's an honest to gosh privilege to do that. You need to be sure Monday morning, Friday night, Saturday afternoon, whenever it is that the patient is at the center and that we care a lot about what happens to them. And that the falls and the preventable accidents and those things that unfortunately happen in hospitals and that we need to improve on, that that becomes a very personal thing. I think that is absolutely important. You can't say, "I'm too important for that." What you're saying is, "I'm entitled to this job." If you're going to be a leader in healthcare,

you have to take on that accountability and that burden, that ownership, that privilege to be sure the patient stays at the center of everything that we do.

I think **the third thing** is you've got to engage your employees. You can set the example but you still can't assume that they're going to connect the dots for you. You have to be out and about with your employees. You can't be a corner office what I call the ghost CEO, the phantom. That doesn't work anymore. As more and more millennials move into the situation, into the industry, they have different values and different expectations. So a CEO has to be engaged with his or her employees, his or her customers, the doctors. When you buy a doctor's practice, you're not buying them. They become an employee and employees are customers just like patients are, so you better pay attention to that.

I think **the fourth thing** is you've got to be a great communicator, you really have to be a good communicator. You need to think everyday about what your message is going to be to your employees, to your patients, to your physicians, to your team, and keep everybody focused on the values. You have to keep inspiring them because that's what leadership is all about, is inspiring people. You do that through good communication and being authentic and being consistent.

The last thing I think is you've got to be cutting edge. You have to be a subject matter expert. A lot of people say, "Education is a lifelong endeavor." Yet, there's so many people out there that aren't staying up to date, or they want to argue with you when you start talking about the obvious changes that are on the way. The old County Judge in Ft. Worth said, "Gentlemen, the train is on the tracks. You're either on the train or on the tracks." You have to be willing to embrace change. There are guys that'll be out in the middle of Central Expressway in Dallas at rush hour, looking for that change. Trying to understand that change, trying to figure out how they can take that change and benefit their patients and their system and do the right thing.

Dan Nielsen: Those are great. Summarize them again, just key words.

John Self: Authenticity, **values**, you've got to **care about the patient**, you've got to do that. You have to **engage your employees**. You have to **communicate with people effectively**. You really have to **stay current**, you have to be a subject matter expert on what's happening in healthcare because otherwise that train will run over you.

Dan Nielsen: Excellent advice from a search consultant who's done searches all across America for decades. Has a lot of advice, a lot of counsel and a lot of wisdom. I'm sorry I didn't refer to your grey hair too much, did I? It's a pleasure to have John Self, he's a friend of mine, a highly credible man. Listen when he speaks, read his information on his website. He writes great articles, he's a former newspaper man and has a million stories to tell. John thanks for joining us today.

John Self: It's great to see you.

Dan Nielsen: You bet.