



Rana Florida

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Your Start-Up Life: Why Serving Is the New Leading

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Thursdays at the Huffington Post, Rana Florida, CEO of [The Creative Class Group](#), will answer readers' questions about how they can optimize their lives. She will also feature conversations with successful entrepreneurs and thought leaders about how they manage their businesses, relationships, careers, and more. Send your questions about work, life, or relationships to rana@creativeclass.com.

Patients from around the world travel to Rochester, Minnesota to be cared for by [Mayo Clinic](#) physicians. Renowned for its innovative and effective treatments and advancements in outside-the-box medical thinking, practices, and research, the Mayo Clinic consistently leads in quality standard listings. For more than two decades it's topped the annual [U.S. News & World Report Best Hospitals list](#).

The Mayo Clinic is not only a great place for patients; it is also a terrific place to work. For eight years straight, it's been on *Fortune* Magazine's list of [America's 100 Best Companies to Work For](#).

At the helm is President and CEO [John Noseworthy, MD](#), the former medical director of the Mayo Clinic's Department of Development, as a professor in its Department of Neurology, and as the former editor-in-chief of *Neurology* (the journal of the American Academy of Neurology).



Several readers have asked me how they can really hone their leadership style, so I went to the best. Dr. Noseworthy not only teaches us to surround ourselves with smart people and listen to them but urges us to exercise integrative thinking, to encourage innovation, and to lead through serving. For more of his inspirational advice, read on:

How do you get an organization to buy into a mission of excellence?

Employees are looking for a compelling vision, mission and values to align with their personal and professional passions. Well-run organizations recognize this connection and provide opportunities for employees to pursue both passions. At Mayo Clinic, we have a compelling primary value: The needs of the patient come first. This value has been in place since our organization was established, and it is at the heart of everything we do.

You recently hosted the Dalai Lama for a panel discussion on resilience through mindfulness. How important is integrative thinking for growth?

Integrative thinking is a higher order holistic and authentic thought process that helps us remain anchored in our primary mission, while incorporating a multitude of relevant inputs to drive growth and value. In a large and complex organization like Mayo, with many short and long term challenges and opportunities, it is relatively easy to get distracted by an individual event. Integrative thinking helps us keep the patient's best interest at the center, and recognizes the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of each patient. In addition to providing high quality medical care, we also need to provide an environment that fosters compassion and respect for each of our patients. To make that happen, we strive to insure that every member of the Mayo Clinic lives by these values and truly feels grateful for every patient that we are privileged to serve. The principles that His Holiness the Dalai Lama shared in our panel discussion are key to stimulating integrative thinking. Such thinking creates trust and value for our patients, and is a critical driver of growth.

Mayo Clinic is a pioneer in new and leading treatments. How do you keep innovating?

The Mayo brothers founded their medical practice based on an innovative concept -- the integrated team practice of medicine. This single concept of patient-centric, team-based care anchored to a shared medical record, is arguably one of the most disruptive innovations in health care in the 20th century. That foundation and continued emphasis on the value of innovation has led to many discoveries and improvements in patient care.

Our innovations come from all of our staff, whether it's a discovery on the clinical side or an implemented improvement to an administrative process. The Mayo Clinic culture encourages innovation so much so that our intellectual property office receives a new idea every day.

The Mayo Clinic has topped the *U.S. News & World Report* List of Best Hospitals for more than 20 years. What strategies do you put in place to maintain this level of success?

While no single set of measures can perfectly represent healthcare quality, we are proud to have been recognized by so many. The endorsement reinforces our century-old commitment to providing the highest quality care to each patient every day. More than any other health care organization, Mayo Clinic's model of care is defined by teamwork with a group of experts working together to focus their expertise on one patient at a time.

How would you describe your leadership style?

Leaders at Mayo Clinic embody Robert Greenleaf's model of "servant leadership," in which the desire to serve supersedes the desire to lead. As leaders at Mayo Clinic, we are deeply rooted in and focused first and foremost on service to our patients. Successful leaders at Mayo mobilize the organization to best serve our patients. My style is to surround myself with really smart people and then listen to them, while encouraging the team to think and act boldly. Timely consensus must be followed by disciplined, successful execution of the plan.

Patients from around the world fly in for treatment from a Mayo Clinic physician. What challenges do you have to overcome by not being in a major city?

Some people think Mayo Clinic is in Rochester, New York, instead of Rochester, Minnesota. Also, Minnesota's major airport is in Minneapolis, which is about 80 miles away. We encourage our patients to

fly into the Rochester airport, which is small and very easy to use. Mayo has a patient desk at the airport, and our people are right there to greet and assist them as soon as they walk off the plane.

Overall, our small-city atmosphere is an advantage for our patients. The town is beautiful, it's easy to get around, it's simple to find Mayo -- and everyone welcomes our patients as part of our community. We're happy to be in a city of 100,000 people. We work diligently with leaders across all sectors of the community to anticipate and meet the needs of our patients as a destination medical community.

When you've reached expert status where do you look for best practices?

We assemble internal teams of experts and then look inside and outside the organization for best practices that can improve and strengthen our work.

A few years ago we created the Mayo Clinic's Center for Innovation (CFI) to transform the way health care is delivered and experienced. CFI builds on Mayo's history and culture of innovation and strongly illustrates Mayo's commitment to look outside our walls for best practices. The center fosters innovation across the Mayo Clinic and builds relationships inside and outside of Mayo to understand the expertise, process and science of applying design-thinking principals to health care delivery. Experts such as Tim Brown of IDEO, Larry Keeley of Doblin, and Rebecca Onie of Health Leads, are among the experts that CFI has assembled to create its transformational innovation in health care. CFI has made design thinking, a common business practice, an embedded methodology for use throughout Mayo Clinic.

You've renewed the Mayo Clinic's commitment to diversity. How does diversity help an organization?

The global environment is changing rapidly and health care, in particular, faces its share of challenges. Bringing together great minds from a spectrum of backgrounds has always been crucial to our mission. Our diversity allows us to accelerate innovation and solve problems faster. Ultimately, it fuels the medical discoveries that lead to better care for our patients and people around the world.

To drive innovation to meet their changing needs, we nurture an environment in which our physicians, scientists and staff can use their unique backgrounds and perspectives to tackle important problems. Collectively, their diverse perspectives enhance our productivity and help us better meet the needs of our increasingly diverse patients.

Yet as a goal or strategy, diversity is not enough. Inclusion, or creating a workplace where each member of our staff feels valued and empowered, is crucial.

What is your advice for other organizations searching for top talent?

Top talent, regardless of the position, title or responsibility held, must support and contribute to the mission and primary value of the organization. At the Mayo Clinic, that means seeking highly skilled individuals who exemplify qualities such as teamwork, respect, compassion and integrity to ensure the needs of the patient come first. Mayo Clinic's responsibility is to recruit, retain and find ways to support top talent and remove barriers to allow them to be successful.

**How do you manage superstars in medicine? How do you make them part of the team?
How do you build a successful team?**

While Mayo Clinic does have many of the world's leading experts in any given specialty, many physicians enjoy long careers here because they believe in the collaborative, team approach to delivering care. Our team approach relies on a variety of medical specialists working together to provide the highest-quality care for our patients.