Administrator’s Scorecard
Below is a list of 10 important attributes possessed by some of the best administrators. This list is by no means complete, and no administrator could be expected to have top scores on all of these attributes. Circle the most appropriate number for each item and add up the total. The maximum score is 20 points.

Score each item on this 10-item list based on the following scale:
2 = This attribute is present in abundance
1 = This attribute is present but not yet fully developed
0 = This attribute is absent

All Rights Reserved

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.”
Henry David Thoreau

1. Raw Career Tenure in Healthcare Services Management/Leadership
It takes about 25,000 hours of hard work and a very heavy tuition bill to turn a bright high school graduate into a rookie eye surgeon. In another 10,000 hours or so beyond this you have a 35 year old ophthalmologist who most readers of this column would be comfortable having operate on a distant and not-too-favored relative. Not coincidently, 35 is about the minimum age at which we could reasonably expect a practice administrator to not muff up a small and non-challenging practice. At 55 and above we typically see both surgeons and administrators at the height of their prowess. Score your administrator on this key factor.
Score: 0 1 2

2. An Energizing Spirit
Most people enjoy movies, concerts and stage plays...in part because they are so energizing. After two hours you walk back out onto the street more pumped and powerful than when you entered the theater. In a tangible and non-manipulative sense, powerful and effective administrators are like effective performers. They add positive energy to each person in the practice. Where is your administrator on this trait? (Note: Sometimes in a misplaced effort to whip up the troops, an ineffective physician or lay leader will apply negative energy. This actually sets the organization backwards.)
Score: 0 1 2

3. Close-to-Perfect Performance Standards, But Still Human
Ophthalmology likes to pride itself on having a “perfect” performance standard. This is, of course, something of an urban myth. Half of all ophthalmologists perform below average surgery and half work in below average practices. However, the vast majority of both lay staff and providers strive for perfection. The best administrators are infected early in their careers by this institutional, ophthalmological striving for perfection, while tempering this with the knowledge that human staff will often fall short of this goal.
Score: 0 1 2
4. Communication Excellence in All Forms and Situations
The especially effective administrator is lucid. They capture and convey both facts and moods in the fewest words possible. Whether writing, speaking (or even sending non-verbal signals) they make themselves clear to others. They help team members who see things differently get on the same page. They translate the board’s wishes to the rank-and-file, and the rank-and-file’s concerns back up the chain of command. How does your administrator perform in this area?
Score: 0 1 2

5. Numeracy: A Visceral Feel For…and Enjoyment of…Numbers
Effective practice leaders ask objective questions obliging numeric answers. Not: “How’s it going in billing this week?” But: “What percentage of our open accounts are still out over 90 days?” They have as memorized and integrated a grasp of your practice’s key performance indicators as you do of your favorite patient’s latest glaucoma statistics. They know when the numbers are favorable. They know when the numbers are way off and corrective action is needed. And most importantly, like a great physician, they know their own limitations. When they are mystified by an adverse figure, they seek out advice.
Score: 0 1 2

6. Relationships With the Owners as a Trusted Peer-Collaborator, Not Minion
This attribute is a two-way street. An administrator, to be effective, must have the board’s enduring confidence. But so too must the board—and especially the managing partner—enjoy the confidence of the company’s lay leader. Weak boards kill administrative performance faster and more completely than weak administrators kill practices. If you are disappointed in your administrator’s current performance, ask yourself, “How much of this is due to distrust or belittling from the top of our company…or due to behavior on our part as surgeons which has reduced the respect we enjoy as owners?”
Score: 0 1 2

7. A Builder of Alignment Between Owners, Managers and Staff
Imagine dropping a fist-full of 20 or 30 or 50 toothpicks on an empty table, with each toothpick representing one member of your practice. Would the resulting disarray represent your practice as it stands today, a jumble, or is everyone aligned and heading in the same direction? Great administrators are natural “aligners.” They articulate a few chief goals and help to align everyone in that direction.
Score: 0 1 2

8. Multifocal: The Ability to See Both the Big Picture and the Tiniest Details
Because eye surgeons deal in such minutia, it’s only natural that they should attract lay managers who are similarly obsessive. Such attention to detail is necessary but not sufficient in superior administrators. In addition to picking out the granular details, the effective manager can stand back and see how all the grains make up a beach, a boulder or a sandstone cliff.
Score: 0 1 2

9. Excellent Middle Manager Selection, Training and Delegation
The biggest rookie mistake of young administrators is to not sufficiently develop and lean on their midlevel staff. In the truly great ophthalmology practices of America, the administrator, executive director or CEO could be absent for a month, and the department heads would keep their companies humming.
Score: 0 1 2

10. A Company-Wide Role Model as a Calm, Efficient, Intensely Hard Worker
The best practice leaders are the first to arrive and the last to leave. They walk just a bit faster down the hall than everyone else. When you watch them thinking about a problem, there’s a furrowed-brow intensity that rivals the country’s leading surgeons…and then a smile when they’ve got a answer. They multi-task. They remember last year’s conversations as well as they remember last week’s. Like the best surgeons, they embody a relaxed intensity. Maddeningly, they are almost always right.
Score: 0 1 2

Total Score: _______