

Embracing and Leading the Possibilities of the Future

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In late 2017, a [Vox.com](#) article titled “The fax of life: Why American medicine still runs on fax machines” had people talking. It described the endurance of fax machines and their use in healthcare, noting that in many practices, the “electronic system can’t connect with other clinics’ records. So when doctors want to retrieve records from another office—an ultrasound for a pregnant patient, for example—they have to turn to the fax.”¹

Health information exchange has come a long way, but there’s still a long way to go before we achieve true interoperability. Like many industries, amid many changes and disruptions healthcare struggles to adapt. The same can be said for AHIMA as we finish this, our 90th year.

It’s been a year for taking stock. As the association’s new leader, I’ve seen how critical it is to assess how AHIMA moves forward during a time of turbulent change. Along with the AHIMA Board of Directors and the staff, this year we have sought to distinguish AHIMA not as a legacy organization resting on its laurels, but as a living organization embracing and leading the possibilities of the future.

Businessman and coach Joe Schumacker makes the case that “A Living Organization is one which is intent on achieving its purpose. It is structured to perform its functions. The future is a frame of reference for achievement of its purpose. A Living Organization says, ‘This is what we do; therefore, this is what we are.’” In contrast, he writes, a “Legacy Organization says, ‘This is what we are; therefore, this is what we do.’”²

We stand at an important crossroads where there are great opportunities for the profession and for AHIMA. To fully embrace the possibilities... and our potential... we must ask ourselves: in what ways must we let go of what was in order to not miss what *is* or what *can be*?

These are some of the questions we have focused on this year:

- We must evaluate and clearly articulate our purpose as a 21st century organization and decide whether our current mission and vision enable us to achieve this purpose.
- We must effectively leverage our industry knowledge and brand to navigate technological and demographic changes head-on... to identify opportunities to serve as industry disruptors.
- We must ensure that AHIMA members are well positioned to participate at leadership tables that enrich them professionally and enable them to create a stronger healthcare system.
- We must engage in authentic dialogue about the barriers that will prevent us from living our full potential.
- We must embrace the possibilities by willingly stepping out of our personal and professional comfort zones.
- We must evolve as a profession, as an association, and as leaders to support a constant state of renewal and innovation.

This is an exciting challenge, and we have much work to do. AHIMA will keep you updated on our progress and ways you can participate. Together, we will move forward.

Notes

1. Kliff, Sarah. “The fax of life.” Vox. Jan. 12, 2018. www.vox.com/health-care/2017/10/30/16228054/american-medical-system-fax-machines-why.
2. Schumacker, Joel. “Living vs. Legacy Organizations.” May 24, 2013. <http://joeschumacker.com/2013/05/24/living-vs-legacy-organizations/>.

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