

# First Look Within

Save to myBoK

by Linda Kloss, MA, RHIA, executive vice president/CEO

I borrow this column's title from a thought-provoking new book, *Change the World*, by Robert E. Quinn. Sound pretty lofty? Perhaps, until you read the subtitle: *How Ordinary People Can Accomplish Extraordinary Results*.

Quinn, a professor of organizational behavior and human resource management at the University of Michigan Business School, promulgates a new way of thinking about change—whether in a family, social network, or public or private corporation. His theory, admittedly very oversimplified, is that inner change makes outer change possible.

From a psychological perspective, this is not a new or radical concept. But from a managerial perspective, it represents a new way of thinking about how to lead change.

Change is often poorly executed. I am sure we could compile a very enlightening (and sad) record of failed change efforts in healthcare organizations. Some managers approach change by telling you why it is going to be good for you. Others approach it by fiat, telling you that you or people and systems you manage must change. Some try the telling approach first and, if that doesn't work, coerce change.

More enlightened managers use dialogue and participation—a more effective but more demanding approach. Quinn's first two action principles, "Envision the Productive Community" and "First Look Within," came to mind as I read this month's features.

## HIM and Our Environment

In our cover story, Ellen Borges, an expert in organizational behavior and a researcher who has studied our evolving field, helps us understand how HIM has been shaped by the industry we serve. Many problems we cite as being unique to today's environment, such as the shortage of qualified personnel, are clearly not new. Many trends obvious today, such as the greater diversity of HIM roles, have been emerging for a number of decades. Borges also shows us the constants in our field—the functional domains that have been our "continued source of uniqueness," the transferability of skills to new roles and settings.

Quinn's first principle suggests that we should shape our relationship to our environment and not be servants of the system, but become servants to the system. We can be most effective in producing change in our organizations if we get outside the hierarchical box and press for the right thing to do, enlisting the help of those who need to be involved to get it done. Many HIM issues call for such leadership, and the impact of our actions (and recognition for it) will accrue to those, either in managerial or technical roles, who work to make the system better.

## Reform from Within

You will enjoy meeting the four HIM colleagues introduced in "HIM Roads Less Traveled." I am fortunate to know these people, and their stories are inspiring. They made career and life decisions with clarity of purpose. They leveraged their skills and knowledge and enhanced them where necessary. Effectiveness characterizes their work. They are very good at what they do and never stop becoming better.

In "Career Management, Not Transition," John Barrett provides a technique for self-analysis. This self-assessment is not a technique used only at the outset of one's career or at times of great change. It's a continuous process for those who want to accomplish extraordinary results. And it is, as Quinn tells us, a process of continually realigning our behavior to the fundamental choices we are making: "The clearer we are about ourselves, the greater is our capacity for change." <sup>1</sup>

I enjoy learning about change because I think that it is at the heart of so much of our modern stress. I also enjoy learning about our field and its opportunities and heroes. I am well aware of the extraordinary stresses of working in today's healthcare

system. How could it be otherwise when we are in a period that is as revolutionary as the early part of the last century? Remember Borges' words when the going gets rough: "If information is the most important resource for the foreseeable future, so are those professions that control the keys to the information."

## Note

1. Quinn, R.E. *Change the World*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

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