

Get in the Arena: A Call to IG Competency

Save to myBoK

By Robyn Stambaugh, MS, RHIA

A new season in my life always lends itself to reflection and realignment of goals. With a freshly finished HIM graduate program in the rear view it's time to map out where both personal and professional intellectual curiosities will lead. As luck would have it, I have a bucket list of things to tackle now that time allows for pursuit of them. Top of the list professionally: broaden my information governance (IG) skill set. How did this get to the top of the list? Several factors were an influence in the decision, including:

- The call from AHIMA to claim our place as leaders in IG and engage in this new field
- Linda Kloss's book *Implementing Health Information Governance, Lessons from the Field* (my personal copy now dog eared and highlighted)
- My graduate IG research study

A primary takeaway from the alignment of those factors is the relevance of assessing one's knowledge base and working toward IG competency. This cannot be overstated. Without working knowledge in this field we will lose the opportunity for effective participation along with a notable place as leaders in IG. Other professionals will surely seize this moment should we fall behind in acquiring mastery.

Inspired by a recent read of Teddy Roosevelt's *Citizen in a Republic*, in which Roosevelt issues an earnest request for engagement by citizens, I am moved by his speech to reflect on my own level of participation in "the arena." The discourse addresses the need for bold citizens who will get in the arena where it is tough, the work often dirty. And they remain steadfast in their commitment to stay amid the ups and downs, along with the triumphs and missteps therein. My very simplified interpretation of his work hears the encouragement to the "citizen" to stand daily in the arena and put forth effort, without fear amidst all that exists there. For in the end, it is better to be an active participant rather than a bystander passively standing outside the arena.

As we work in our respective organizations, inherently we assume professional responsibility to practice our craft to the best of our ability; to do so, we must have acumen that allows for it. As it relates to IG, acquiring competency begins with not trying to "boil the ocean," but rather to systematically acquire an expanding knowledge base. Thankfully, we have access to textbooks on the subject, articles, boot camp, webinars, and tool kits to help us develop our own personal pathway to IG competency. The pursuit of subject matter expertise is a journey; although not easy, it remains worthwhile. It is a road full of challenges, continual effort, victory, and, yes, sometimes mistakes. I have come to understand that lifelong learning is something we sign up for when we enter this profession. Sounds like life in the arena, doesn't it?

Ultimately, the true test of competency comes at the point of practical application. I am using the building blocks within enterprise information management (EIM) found in Kloss's book as a guide to drive IG structure and strategy in my organization; it helps hone in on the components within each block. Building in this manner provides a systematic way to look at policies, procedures, and processes; it's application of gap analysis methodology. Here's an example: start with Privacy, Confidentiality, and Security. This block is seen as the underpinning of EIM and IG, it provides for the protection of information and validation of compliance. Establish your goals, consider each component function and what elements are necessary to validate in each. Take security, for instance—if the goal is to ensure regulatory compliance, adhere to laws, and best practice usage, begin with examination of your organization's current risk assessment and mitigation plan. Start examination through questions, such as:

- Are HIPAA-compliant policies, procedures, and processes in place that speak to security risk analysis and proactive risk mitigation?
- Does documentation support how risk analysis was completed?

At minimum, this approach enables forward momentum with IG, provides an avenue for collaboration among stakeholders, and certainly challenges IG competency.

IG is a broad subject, not one we can learn overnight. HIM professionals possess expertise that enhances our ability to navigate the new frontier of IG practice; however, it will require learning and application of IG concepts to become the leaders we are called to be in this field. As a citizen of the HIM community, I'm committed to engagement in "the arena" to embrace the avenues that will broaden my IG knowledge base; all necessary to acquire competency. Are you in the arena?

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Original source:

Stambaugh, Robyn. "Get in the Arena: A Call to IG Competency" ([Journal of AHIMA website](#)), October 13, 2016.

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