

HIM Can Propel IG to Where It Needs to Be

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By Lori Seargeant, MA, RHIA

The more I learn, the more I realize how much I do not know.
-Einstein

Information governance (IG) is a growing discipline in many industries, yet we are finding it just taking hold in healthcare with the robust momentum it merits. Recognizing the many compelling reasons for IG to hold space in the healthcare sector, the cover story of the [December 2013 issue of Journal of AHIMA](#) was dedicated to discussing clean information and integrous data. But with the likes of electronic health record (EHR) implementations or the transition to ICD-10-CM/PCS demanding our attention at the same time, many in the industry—myself included—may have glossed over the relevance of this particular issue at that time.

But I can now see IG implementation as a call to duty, a chance to reinvigorate my interest in my profession and add tremendous value to my organization. From the start of my IG journey, I could see I had a lot to learn. I came to understand that our organizations would need to continuously improve in order to keep up with constant advances being made in technology used in our field, the fluctuating landscape of healthcare, and the sheer volume of information being generated, used, and stored. Fortunately, I've also learned we have many resources to assist in helping to close the knowledge gaps, and there are many HIM professionals poised to make it happen.

Educating and onboarding stakeholders as well as assessing and developing your particular skills will be paramount in successfully implementing an IG program.

Many stakeholders feel their organization already has an IG program because they have a data governance program in place. Others see IG as a function of the IT department and thus question whether HIM professionals should be the ones trying to initiate it. Others think IG is simply HIM in disguise. It's important to demonstrate IG in action as a way to address these misconceptions. Look for exemplary IG models, preferably outside of the HIM department, to draw parallels for your stakeholders. Or find a pain-point in your organization that can be remedied with thoughtful IG. Start putting an IG framework in place on a smaller scale, bringing the appropriate players together and putting the processes and technology in place to demonstrate the potentiality of IG and the tremendous business value it can bring.

As you begin to extrapolate IG methodologies to educate stakeholders, you will concurrently start identifying the gaps in your own knowledge. I found it helpful to start with AHIMA's [IGIQ.com](#), where you can find toolkits, resources, training, and models all dedicated to Information Governance. The [Information Governance Initiative](#), a community space and think-tank, is another useful resource for learning from colleagues and staying abreast of this unfolding practice.

Wherever you start, I encourage you to be energetic in your efforts and positive in the face of inevitable skepticism, reflective of your leadership abilities to create a climate that empowers and engages others, and authentic in your efforts to affect such important change for your organizations. The gaps will begin to close. You will become more and more versed in the information challenges impacting record management, privacy, compliance, legal matters, business issues, and IT. And you will impel information governance into the coordinated, all-encompassing program it needs to be.

Are you ready for the call to duty?

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Original source:

Seargeant, Lori. "HIM Can Propel IG to Where It Needs to Be" ([Journal of AHIMA website](#)), July 14, 2016.

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