

HIM Leaders Address Leadership

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by Carol A. Campbell, DBA, RHIA, FAHIMA

In this special edition of *Perspectives in Health Information Management*, the central theme is the obligations of leadership, i.e., individuals in positions of leadership have an obligation to be ethically centered, authentic, and blind to differences. In other words, organizations will suffer (albeit differently) whether a leader views himself as a new-age Don Quixote or behaves like Joseph Conrad's Kurtz in the disturbing novel "*Heart of Darkness*." Good intentions, no matter how zealous the leader, are insufficient in meeting organizational needs and Kurtz-like behaviors, no matter the amount of charisma, will eventually have disastrous consequences.

In his book, *Parkinson's Law*, C. Northcote Parkinson, notes that "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." Parkinson diagnosed why certain organizations suddenly deteriorate by explaining that failure occurs when individuals with unusually high combinations of incompetence and jealousy (injelitance) are promoted to positions of authority. If Don Quixote and Kurtz were cloned into a single person, the dominate characteristic would likely be a version of Parkinson's injelitance.

Fortunately, aspiring leaders are not left with only Don Quixote or Kurtz as examples. Rather, leaders can base their approach on professional codes of ethics; an approach that is described by the Harman et al paper entitled "Code of Ethics: Past and Future." In their papers, Barefield and Meyer and Layman expand on this ethical cornerstone perspective. Barefield and Meyer *describe* best-practice methods for supporting major project initiatives in "Leadership's Role in Support of Online Academic Programs." Layman suggests that job redesign is a means by which leadership skills can be developed in "Leading by Design." Campbell explores why some bosses are bad and suggests six characteristics of appropriate leadership in "Reflections on Leadership". Johns reminds us that organizational glass ceilings are not yet fully dismantled in "Breaking the Glass Ceiling," suggesting that there are fewer women than men with keys to the C-suite.

Much work remains for those who have their eyes set on leadership roles, even more so for those who aspire to fill those roles as ethically-centered, authentic, and blind to differences leaders. Ranging from an historical view of ethical principles to applications of fundamental management practices, this edition of *Perspectives in Health Information Management* provides a forum of viewpoints on the mandates for leaders.

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