

IG: An Organizational Structure Where Everyone is MVP

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By Stephanie Crabb, AM

How are football and IG related? Anyone who knows me knows that I am a sports fanatic and football is my favorite professional team sport. So, as we stand on the precipice of the playoff season, I have football on my mind. With IG ALWAYS on my mind, I found myself thinking about how to answer just that question.

It may seem cliché to discuss sports and team analogies when talking about organizational structures, but when we talk about IG—what it takes to not only get started, but to sustain an IG effort—the analogy fits.

Many of the IGIQ blog posts to date have a common theme—getting started with IG—because this is the question that we get asked the most, hands down. Establishing the right organizational structure, building the team, is one of the cornerstones for success.

In the case of IG, the organizational structure—the team structure that we put into place—informs and guides how we mobilize and sustain our people and processes to advance the strategic use of information. It ensures that we are continuously promoting and reinforcing our commitments to align information use with our organization's strategic priorities. It defines requisite relationships and mechanisms for decision making, authority, investment, and risk management.

When we think about the organization of IG, many quickly realize the importance of establishing a steering committee or council and take action on this important step. In football terms, this committee is a combination of the “front office leadership” and “coaching staff.” This part of our IG team establishes the IG charter, provides planning guidance, creates policies and procedures, establishes and advises task forces/work groups, makes decisions based on recommendations from those task forces/work groups, seeks approvals and/or funding from the executive component as appropriate, tracks accomplishments, measures and reports progress.

But, as we have learned over the past eighteen months of our focus in this space, a steering committee is not sufficient to move from “concept” to “action.” We need doers; we need our players!

In football, players each have a specialty position, those specialties form small working units, like the offensive line or defensive secondary, that roll up to the “offense, defense, and special teams” that elevate and give additional purpose to their specialties. Together, they execute the game plan, each contributing uniquely and collaboratively. Our IG organizational structure is no different. In fact, as you look across your organizational landscape today, you probably can readily identify committees, work groups, etc. that are doing some piece or part of IG already, but they are not harmonized with the IG mission or opportunity in a purposeful way. There is not really a game plan and they are often working without a coaching staff. These groups are just like the offense, defense, and special teams in football. They should be established and aligned with the IG mission, know where they fit into the team structure, and have an understanding of their parts of the IG play book. It is within these units that the real work gets done, and the team does not succeed without excellent execution and collaboration from each of them.

And let's not forget the trainers, cheerleaders (yes, the cheerleaders), sideline managers, groundskeepers, “hydration technicians”... the myriad of roles on the front line that contribute to the success of any football team. These contributors are the members of your workforce, that also work on the front line, creating, consuming, and making decisions about your organization's information every day. They need to be activated as well to establish “local” IG expertise, support the widespread adoption of IG, and advance the IG culture within each and every functional area, to build a growing capacity of IG competence and talent.

I challenge the idea that IG is a “top-down” initiative but would be remiss if I did not emphasize the importance of executive sponsorship and engagement. Just like the “owners” of the most successful football franchises, our healthcare organizations'

boards of directors and executive leadership teams establish a positive “tone from the top” for IG, ensure continuous alignment to the organization’s strategy, provide necessary funding, and provide general oversight.

An IG program that is positioned for long-term success will engage the whole team in some way all of the time to ensure engagement, participation, and enablement from the top-down and from the bottom-up. Certainly, resources and effort will be expended disproportionately throughout the journey, but the entire team needs attention, guidance, and fuel to perform at its best.

IG is absolutely a team sport in every way. Don your jerseys, create your play books, huddle up, and take the field! Make everyone an MVP; the wins will come and the pride will grow.

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