

If It Ain't Broke, Improve It

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by Barbara P. Fuller, JD, RHIA

The time for change and refocus in an organization is when it is successful, advises Peter Drucker, author of *Managing The Nonprofit Organization: Practices and Principles*. If we look at AHIMA right now-with membership increasing, a sound budget in place, and exciting job opportunities for members-one might think that AHIMA should rest, relax, and coast for a while. Surely it is a time when everyone might counsel, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." But Drucker disagrees and suggests that an important improvement strategy is to "put efforts into successes. Improve the areas of success and change them."

Charging Toward the Cutting Edge

This was the idea behind AHIMA's Organizational Structure Task Force. The committee recommended expeditions, Communities of Practice, and Internet-based plans. The goal was to move the Association into the 21st century with cutting-edge technology available to all. When we think of the changes that are already occurring and are likely to come, we may take comfort in Drucker's advice to regard change as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Take a moment to consider some of the changes that lie in our future. One of AHIMA's goals is to include the body of knowledge on the Internet. This is the knowledge upon which the HIM profession is based. Of course, we will still have textbooks, but we will be able to immediately access HIM information just as we now access information needed in our daily lives via the Internet. Do you remember when we waited on the Journal, a newsletter, or a workshop to learn the latest federal regulations affecting our practice? I do, and I remember a sense of frustration that we could not get important information out to our members in a timely manner.

Built for Speed

RHIA and RHIT credentialing examinations will soon be administered electronically. This means that examinees will know the results of their efforts immediately after completing the exam. Further, an electronic exam allows the association to administer the test more than once a year. Educators and students alike have been concerned with the wait between examination dates. Now, the flow of newly credentialed practitioners can be continuous. Our manpower needs will be better supplied and our students served more efficiently. This change complements the HIM educational process with flexibility and emphasis on choices.

Perhaps one of the largest and most important challenges facing us just now is implementing the HIPAA standards for privacy of individually identifiable health information. Remember that the terms "privacy," "confidentiality," and "security" have been a part of our everyday vocabulary for a long time. We must take a leadership role as implementation of HIPAA regulations move forward.

Leadership Is Everyone's Responsibility

Speaking of leadership, many people are working hard to ensure the success of AHIMA's new direction: the Association staff, board of directors, and many others in the volunteer structure. "Oh, but they're the leaders. That's their responsibility," some might respond. This is true, but Drucker insists that achieving the success we all want requires that each of us hold ourselves accountable for final results. In other words, to build on our successes and improve what we have already accomplished, each of us must become an on-site leader. "Leadership is not characterized by stars on your shoulders," writes Drucker, but by each of us leading by example and dedicating ourselves to our mission as a means of individual and collective growth and self-respect.

Reference

Drucker, Peter F. *Managing the Nonprofit Organization: Practice and Principles*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.

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