

Inside Look: Navigating Change with Courage

Save to myBoK

By Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE, chief executive officer

Navigating change can be exciting—or it can be scary. It can be especially hard to cope when you feel like you’re right in the middle of change and you don’t know how everything’s going to turn out.

In his sermon “Antidotes for Fear,” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote about courage: “Courage faces fear and thereby masters it. Cowardice represses fear and is thereby mastered by it. Courageous men never lose the zest for living even through their life situation is zestless; cowardly men, overwhelmed by the uncertainties of life, lose the will to live. We must constantly build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear.”¹

In the past year, as I’ve taken on a new job, relocated to a new city, and jumped into the work of AHIMA, I’ve needed that courage. I’ve needed the courage to take risks. I’ve made sure to hold on to my anchors—those important things in my life that have kept me grounded amid the chaos. And I’ve been deliberate, understanding my options as I make decisions.

The articles in this month’s *Journal* each touch on different ways HIM professionals can cope with change in our careers and build “dikes of courage.”

Leading, engaging, and motivating others during times of change can be a big challenge for managers. In “Weathering the Storm,” Mary Butler talks to HIM professionals about their experiences leading through the chaos of change. One HIM director recommends empathetically listening to others and putting yourself in their shoes. “Be open to answering all questions, even the really difficult ones,” advises Shannan Swafford, RHIT, CHDA, CCS, in the article. “And if you don’t know, tell them you don’t know. Be honest and kind!”

A few years ago, the cover of this magazine featured an image of a chameleon and the word “Adapt or Disappear.” Amy Watters, EdD, RHIA, FAHIMA, and Ryan Sandefer, PhD, challenge readers to stand out in their environment by sharing their knowledge in “Why You Need to Write for Your Profession.” “Instead of changing color to camouflage, change your colors to vibrant hues that no one can ignore. Use your adaptability to stand out, display your skills, and tout your knowledge. Then publish your work,” they write. (By the way, guidelines for submitting an article to the *Journal of AHIMA* can be found at <http://journal.ahima.org/submission-guidelines/>.)

Outsourcing of HIM functions is a reality due to pressure to reduce costs, but it also prompts concerns about loss of control, quality, and compliance. Susan Carey, MHI, RHIT, PMP, FAHIMA, tackles this topic in “The Business Reality of HIM Outsourcing: Explained.” Carey advises that the issue can’t be discussed based on emotional reactions, but that “outsourcing needs to be approached as a service, and healthcare organizations need to evaluate whether the particular service provider provides the value-add based upon the documented needs of the organization.” She advises HIM professionals to research the risks, establish a governance structure to manage the outsourcing model, and understand and define the desired future state they want.

We’re not done with change. But I hope these articles will help you find your courage.

Note

1. King, Martin L., Jr. “Antidotes for Fear,” in *Strength to Love*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010.

Article citation:

Wiggs Harris, Wylecia. “Navigating Change with Courage.” *Journal of AHIMA* 90, no. 1 (January 2019): 11.

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