

# Taking the Lead in Information Governance

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By Ann Meehan, RHIA

February is IG Month at AHIMA. Whether your organization has an information governance (IG) program in place, underway in implementation, or yet to be fully conceived, health information management (HIM) professionals play a vital role in IG program success. HIM professionals all over the globe need to understand what IG is and why it's important to the success of a healthcare organization. Indeed, who better to lead the IG charge than HIM professionals?

HIM professionals have been leading and directing activities around patient health information for many years. They know the importance of standardization, documented policies and procedures, accuracy, protection, and accountability. HIM professionals understand the need to work collaboratively across all departments of the organization to ensure patient information is accurate and up to date.

IG basically takes HIM practices and expands it across all types of information, across all business units of the organization. Every type of information in a healthcare organization needs to be managed with the same precision. This may seem overwhelming, but HIM professionals have the training in recordkeeping principles to move an IG program forward. Because information governance includes areas such as strategic thinking, information technology, data governance, analytics, and reimbursement, the HIM professionals may need to dig in to learn more about each of these.

First, let's start with essential leadership skills. IG leaders must have the following:

- The vision of why IG is important and the ability to articulate the vision
- Ability to align IG with the organization's strategic goals
- Verbal and written communication skills
- Project management skills
- Coaching and mentoring skills

There are also technical skills that are needed. While it may not be possible to know every technical aspect of IG, it is important that the HIM professional knows enough about the topic to speak intelligently. One area that is critical is a firm understanding of payment reform terms and patient care models, including overall concepts and requirements. A successful transition to any payment and patient care model should be part of the healthcare organization's strategic goals. Trustworthy data and information is critical to meeting payment reform requirements, and a formal information governance program will ensure strategic alignment.

Big data is another area that HIM professionals need to know and understand. There are many sources for learning the concepts of big data that includes what the concepts of volume, velocity, variety, veracity, and value are. Are you familiar with the many sources of data that include the internet of things (IoT), mobile devices, and patient-generated health data? Do you fully understand the difference between metadata and mega data? These are key concepts of data governance, which is one of the IG competencies. Accurate data is needed since it is the input to ensuring the trustworthy output that is information. An organization cannot have information governance without data governance.

These are just examples of subject and industry initiatives of which the HIM professional should have a solid knowledge base. The internet is full of resources for these. Additionally, HIM professionals can sign up for e-newsletters that will help to keep them current on any new developments. The HIM professional must fully understand what is needed to ensure the success of the healthcare organization as a business. The first order of business is to understand IG and to be able to fully explain it.

AHIMA is a wonderful source of information that will support you as you take a leadership role in information governance. Join us for a Virtual IG Boot Camp that allows you to bring an unlimited number of team members to the table. It provides a collaborative environment for engaging stakeholders in your IG program. The next Virtual IG Boot Camp is Friday, February 24, 2017. You can find additional information at <http://www.ahima.org/events/2017virtualfeb-IG-Bootcamp-February>.

Because February has been designated by AHIMA as Information Governance Month, now is the time to take advantage of the many free offerings that AHIMA has to offer on the [www.igiq.com](http://www.igiq.com) website, including webinars. On this website, you will find everything you need to educate yourself, your peers, and the C-suite on IG. There is an IG video that is designed specifically for a busy executive that will quickly communicate IG and how it aligns with your organization's strategic goals.

Information governance is the next career frontier. It is a wonderful opportunity to step out of your comfort zone, learn more about the business of healthcare, and take a leading role. A first step is to take the time to educate yourself, and these resources a great opportunity to do so.

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