

Taking the Lead: Volunteer Opportunities Abound

Save to myBoK

by Barbara Siegel, MS, RHIT

One of my favorite stories is “The Sense of a Goose,” a popular tale by an unknown author that is widely used in public presentations and circulated over the Internet. The story’s basic truths speak of sharing common direction, staying the course, taking turns, and supporting and standing by each other.

HIM leaders practice these truths every day as they influence and inspire others. Do you get excited when you help others succeed? Do you look for new answers to tough questions? Do you have a vision for the future of HIM? If your answer is “yes,” consider taking a volunteer leadership role at the local, state, or national level.

Everyone Can Contribute

The variety of volunteer opportunities in our profession provides diverse time commitments, communication and meeting formats, and the ability to volunteer virtually, face to face, or a bit of both. Volunteer leaders receive recognition at local, state, and national meetings throughout the year. At the National Convention, we’ll celebrate this year’s Triumph Award winners—HIM professionals who have made a difference in the profession through volunteer and professional leadership. But recognition is generally not the reason one chooses to volunteer.

Volunteers bring their experience, business sense, dedication, and optimism to their roles. However, you don’t need years of work experience to be a volunteer. For new professionals with excellent writing and presentation skills, technology or applications knowledge, or for those who are just willing to make a contribution, there is a volunteer role for you. Consider joining a local or state committee, writing for a newsletter, facilitating a CoP, or chairing a committee.

Simple Rewards

Volunteer leaders look for opportunities to meet new people, learn new skills, and to simply feel a sense of belonging.¹ The reward can be as simple as making a difference. When you participate on a committee or on a board of directors, you learn as you go. Don’t understand the intricacies of the budget report? Just ask—no one will hold it against you.

Volunteers bring what they learn from volunteering to other parts of their lives.² My volunteer experience gave me the skills to work collaboratively with administrators, physicians, and other leaders at work. Most importantly, I see my leadership skills reflected in my management staff.

Leaders Grow Leaders

At the Association’s summer leadership conference in Chicago, keynote speaker and consultant and author Randy Pennington challenged the leaders in the room to nurture and grow new leaders. “Each leader, grow another leader,” he encouraged.³ We have a vibrant association of professionals with a culture of sharing and mentoring—a perfect recipe for growing new leaders.

Whether you volunteer or seek a leadership role, now is the time to nurture those who will sustain the HIM culture and our ability to contribute to quality healthcare. Many of us became volunteers because someone asked us to. Some of us became leaders to make a difference.

In “The Sense of a Goose,” when the lead goose gets tired, another takes over the job. We are all headed in the same direction—is it your time to take the lead?

Notes

1. Levesque, Carl J. "Talk about the Passion." *Association Management* 54, no. 1 (2002): 57.
2. O'Connor, J.P. "Recruiting the Right Volunteer." *Association Management* 54, no. 1 (2002): 54.
3. Pennington, Randy. "The New Realities of Leadership." Presentation at the AHIMA Leadership Conference, Chicago, IL, July 13, 2003.

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