

The ICD-10 Vision: An Essential Element in Your Change Leadership Framework November, 2011

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LESLIE: How many times have I heard that ICD-10 is not an IT or HIM project? Too many to recount. What is it then? It's an organization wide program and it is what change leadership expert John Kotter calls a large scale change, a substantial transformation of how work is performed that impacts groups and individuals across an organization, enterprise or industry. There is a human emotional side to the ICD-10 challenge; it isn't just a technical challenge, it is an adaptive challenge -- people must change ingrained habits of the last 30 years.

PATTY: That neatly sums up the challenge that the healthcare industry faces as it prepares to transition to ICD-10. The human side of this transition is not getting much press. To avoid undermining all their hard work and to assure organizations fully realize their ICD-10 objectives, leaders must have a comprehensive framework for change leadership -- one with a systematic approach at its core.

LESLIE: Last December we launched a three-part series of Hands on Help columns on the first step to leading large scale change -- creating urgency. (See the first article titled ICD-10-CM/PCS: What's the Urgency?) This series struck a chord with many of our readers and I am pleased to report that in an August 2011 survey conducted by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), 85 percent of respondents said their organizations had begun work on ICD-10 planning and implementation, a significant jump from 62 percent one year earlier. (See Journal of AHIMA post from Sept. 23, 2011 at <http://tinyurl.com/79pf8ww>.)

PATTY: I am glad to see the progress, but concerned that not everyone has started. It is important here to connect the dots. The U.S. healthcare industry is a behemoth at 17 percent of GDP. It is a national priority to reduce healthcare costs and improve health outcomes, which makes achieving higher quality, more comprehensive and usable data a priority as well. Using ICD-10 is necessary for us to more accurately measure what we are doing and how well we are doing it.

LESLIE: Yes, leaders need urgency -- the will to act; and, they must find ways to inspire others to become enthusiastic participants in a robust change process. Maintaining a sense of urgency over the next 2 years is critical to success, because ICD-10 is just one of several large scale changes in play, i.e. 5010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), meaningful use and EHRs.

PATTY: Add to this the fact that coding workflow is in the middle of a critical transformation also.

LESLIE: With transformation going on all around us, leaders from every seat must create and maintain urgency without creating unnecessary anxiety -- the reactivity that impedes thinking and performance. Urgency and anxiety are very different. I see creating true urgency as a primary function of leadership, while anxiety or destructive urgency, is a result of an absence of leadership.

PATTY: Leaders in many organizations are stumbling on the first step, trying to create a climate for change.

They intend to create urgency, but often in the end create anxiety as you described. Although most organizations have assembled a steering committee, there isn't enough work on crafting and communicating vision, which will help create and maintain true urgency until ICD-10 is implemented.

LESLIE: Getting the vision right is very important and I agree with you, little to no time is being spent creating and communicating vision. The steering committee or team goes right from their assessments to implementation plans, but that is not vision and therefore a set of activities tends to be communicated instead of a clear cohesive vision.

PATTY: According to Dan Cohen in The Heart of Change Field Guide, the vision "must describe the behavior required in the future state, so that the strategies and key performance metrics can be developed to support the vision." We already know that to achieve ICD-10 coding accuracy and overall coded data quality one crucial behavioral change will be in physician documentation practices.

LESLIE: Like physicians, coders too must make significant behavioral changes -- using a new coding system and new tools is a huge change. It will be even more substantial as organizations leverage computer assisted coding to minimize the impact on coding productivity and by extension cash flow, while improving the quality of data afforded by the granularity of ICD-10.

PATTY: There is a lot more to discuss on the topic of vision and preparing for significant behavioral change.

LESLIE: I would like to invite our readers to submit their ICD-10 vision statements to our email addresses below. We will share them with our readers in the continuation of this discussion next month. So stay tuned. More next month in this Hands on Help column.

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