



# There is a leadership gap in healthcare

By Rob Cosinuke | July 11, 2016

The healthcare industry is experiencing massive upheaval, not to mention a colossal challenge: How to reduce cost burdens and, at the same time, improve clinical quality and results.

It's a \$3 trillion, zero-sum game that involves a wide array of players: provider organizations, payers, and the government, all searching for the right levers and the right direction.

And the only path to success will be through strong leadership.

"Leadership is about vision, about people buying in, about empowerment and, most of all, about producing useful change," notes John Kotter, renowned expert of leadership and change management. "Leadership is not about attributes, it's about behavior. And in an ever-faster-moving world, leadership is increasingly needed from more and more people, no matter where they are in a hierarchy."

We know there is a leadership gap in healthcare. According to the 2016 athenahealth Physician Leadership and Engagement Index, a survey of more than 2,000 physicians through the Epocrates mobile app, only 20 percent of physician are engaged – and

those who described their organizations are non-physician-led are even less likely to stay in their jobs, recommend their organizations to friends, or put in effort above and beyond what's required.

Other notable findings include: only 22 percent of respondents said their organization has a clear and well-defined vision and only one-third said both their operations and culture align and support their organization's vision.

Worse, just 13 percent of physicians said they were "extremely satisfied" with their leadership.

That's a major problem, but also an opportunity: to develop a deep farm system of C-suite and physician leaders, ready and willing to take on the task at hand.

Those leaders are more crucial now than ever, as the industry struggles to transition to value-based reimbursements, adopt new technology, create new care delivery models, and face down a landscape of constant change.

That's why athenahealth is launching the Leadership Forum, a bigger and better iteration of what we began with our flagship Leadership

Institute event. We'll be conducting research and publishing results on C-Level behaviors, traits, and best practices. We'll hold live events, leveraging teaching and learning from C-Suite executives and Harvard Business School professors at our Advisory Roundtables, Specialty Forums, and, of course our Leadership Institutes.

Because everyone thinks of leadership in different terms, we are placing a stake in the ground under the framework of The Leader's Triangle from Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson. The Leader's Triangle posits that leadership is the intersection and integration of vision, culture, and operations and that leaders must set a compelling vision, build a corporate culture to achieve that vision, and align the necessary operations to support both.

We will strive to bring you:

- In-depth articles on the Leadership Triangle: how to create a compelling vision, build the right culture, and develop operational capabilities in healthcare
- Luminary Profiles like our Charlie Baker interview – video and longform insights from world-class leaders, regardless of their industries.
- Leadership Perspectives: opinion pieces featuring the hard-won wisdom from those in the C-Suite, including Paul Levy, former CEO of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and Alan Channing, former CEO of Sinai Health System in Chicago.
- High Performing Leadership C-suite profiles from the athenahealth client base, such as University of Toledo Medical Center's Bryan Hinch.
- Expert Forums – Q&As with healthcare's most progressive leaders on topics such as physician engagement, the patient journey, managing risk, and more.
- Leadership coaching from several of the country's leading executive coaching organizations, on topics such as giving feedback, being mindful, and more.
- POV Lessons from other industries, on such topics as what Yahoo's failures can teach healthcare about transitioning to value.

Our vision for the Leadership Forum is to nurture the leadership that healthcare deserves. And our hope is to become a go-to resource for healthcare executives to learn and become inspired.

If we succeed, we will build a culture and community of leaders, ready to bring about change and encourage others to do the same.

But we can't do it without you. We need your energy and participation in profiles and Q&As. We need your perspectives, ideas, and strong opinions.

To that end, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at [leadershipforum@athenahealth.com](mailto:leadershipforum@athenahealth.com).

We look forward to building something great with you.

*Rob Cosinuke is executive director of the Leadership Forum.*

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