

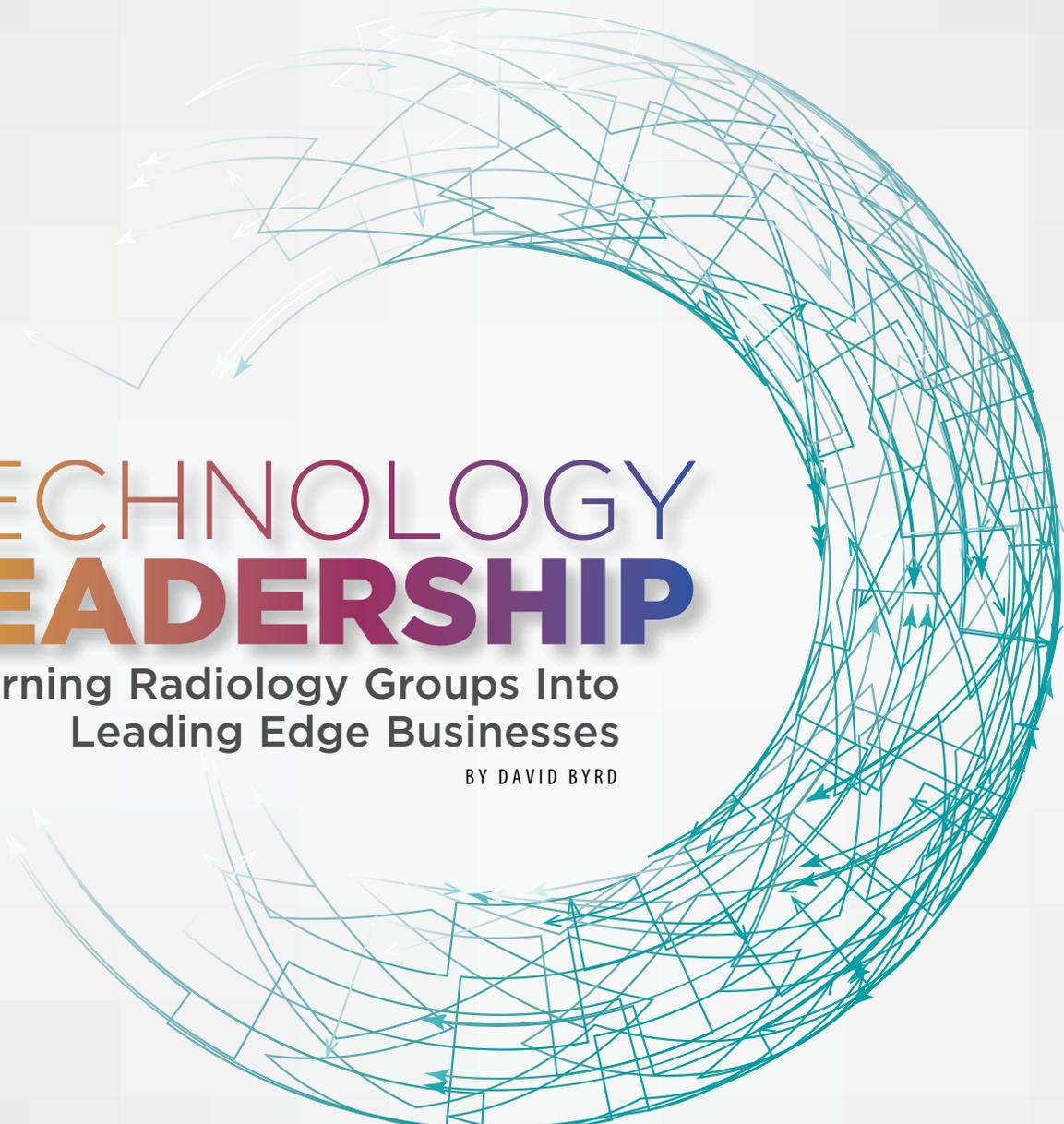


LEADERSHIP

**WHEN IT COMES TO
MEDICAL IMAGING,**
What Do
Patients Know
and Want?

**Leading
the Patient
Experience:**
Rethinking Radiology
Billing for HDHP Patients

**Technology
Leadership:**
TURNING RADIOLOGY
GROUPS INTO LEADING
EDGE BUSINESSES



TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP

Turning Radiology Groups Into Leading Edge Businesses

BY DAVID BYRD

I have been labeled a Gen Xer, which at the time of that labeling made us sound no different than how “they” have now labeled the Millennials; lazy, don’t want to work, selfish, and into technology. For the most part, I believe my generation has overcome the stigma around Gen X other than the love for technology. I’ve always been into technology, which is probably why I have enjoyed the healthcare information technology market so much, especially now as technology is pushing into the clinical and administrative sides of the market at a blistering pace. These technologies are causing radiology groups to run more like radiology businesses in ways that we have never experienced before, and that takes leadership that understands technology and data. But what makes a good technology leader?

Pragmatic Marketing, a leading organization for technology companies, trains product managers on how to look at market problems for technology solutions. They even go so far as to state that a well thought out product sells itself and product managers are the CEOs of their product lines. Thoughts come from humans, and leaders drive thoughts into executables. We are seeing some of the largest companies in the world move into the healthcare space, and their leaders, such as Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook; Tim Cook, CEO of Apple; and Virginia Rometty, CEO of IBM, are all utilizing market and business intelligence data to drive technology solutions for healthcare.

In most organizations, there is a yawning delta between business and information technology. They speak different languages, report to different managers, and pursue

different career paths. Business people shift on a dime to meet new customer requirements and changing market conditions; they value creativity and change that aligns with their short-term and long-term strategies. The IT department focuses on delivering stable, secure, and reliable information services. IT workers are cautious by nature and move thoughtfully to weigh risks and compliance issues that could cost the company in the long term, if not addressed properly. They are aware of the new technologies that are currently in the market that will impact their IT infrastructure and the data these technologies will bring, such as the Internet of Things (IoT). For anyone new to that term, IoT is the network of physical objects or devices, vehicles, buildings, and other items embedded with electronics, software, sensors, and network connectivity, which enables these objects to collect and exchange data. Imagine how a radiologist could better his or her findings with such data from a wearable device for a patient that is being scanned for a possible stroke, and the monitoring that could take place post discharge through such devices.

In today's healthcare environment, you are either at the table or on the menu in this eat-or-be-eaten market. Creating strategic planning formulas for services, systems, and execution relies heavily on turning data into actionable insights and knowledge. Yet, the real challenge organizations face is harnessing what they already have, and that requires leadership. Anyone who has run a business intelligence team knows managing technology is easier than handling the politics involved in applying technology to business problems. That's why there is a strong correlation between leadership and business intelligence success.

Having served my entire career in the healthcare information technology sector, I've had the pleasure of seeing technology leaders spend much of their time aligning people, processes, and politics to address core leadership issues of managing and motivating people up and down the organizational hierarchy. Technology leaders know how to bring together two factions at war over the use of technology. They also navigate political minefields, including the conflict between business and IT, and the divide separating corporate and departmental interests.

These IT leaders create agile, self-governing teams of business leaders and technical experts. As part of this process, the experts are embedded in the business. They report to department heads, sit side by side with business

colleagues, and participate in their meetings. So instead of creating two teams, successful technology leaders assemble one crew focused on delivering business value through technology and data.

Such leaders also hire top talent, searching well beyond just technological skills; they seek well-rounded individuals, often found among business analysts or product managers. They demand a certain level of technical competency, but they want people with solid business knowledge and a passion to harness data for business gain. They recognize that it is easier to train bright, motivated, business-minded individuals to use technology than it is to teach technical specialists the business. This is why solid leadership is key when addressing business intelligence.

Business intelligence is defined as using a computer-based approach and data repository to collect and analyze information about business processes and trends, allowing healthcare providers to track and manage key performance indicators that highlight opportunities of improvement or identify specific trends based upon radiology business goals. Having the right leadership is key as all data is not created equal and business intelligence is not just about pretty visualizations. Today's radiology business intelligence leaders must understand what the data is, where it is derived from, and how it is processed to properly mine for the appropriate and correct business insights. Understanding this allows for meaningful performance metrics, and where cross-system analytics are needed to bridge the gap between today's disparate data gaps, providing greater clarity and control of business operations.

Business intelligence uses data from multiple sources and systems, regardless of size and source, and transforms the data into snapshots to create dynamic answers to the business questions being asked by radiology business administrators today. What drives quality of care? How many visits annually have critical findings? How many hedging terms are our physicians dictating? What percentage of denial rates are for a lack of medical necessity? What is the geographical footprint of our patient base?

Most billing systems available today do provide, or can be integrated with, a report generator to track indicators such as denied charges, net collections, and accounts receivable aging. But these reports are far from intelligent. They may be inaccurate, based on improper or poorly

constructed data, or are so outdated that they cannot be used to drive actions. Often they cannot be trended on a daily basis so that the problem areas can be quickly identified and addressed. They may be mired in such detailed minutia that it becomes difficult to spot a trend at all. Radiology administrators can be overwhelmed with data, yet lack good data intelligence to make the best decision. Without access to integrated data, both structured (claims data) and unstructured data (radiology reports) that are updated on a continuous basis, it is difficult to look at long-term trends and get a big picture view in order to arm yourself with knowledge and lead your radiology business appropriately.

“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower,” Steve Jobs said. Innovators are authentic leaders committed to creating dynamic, highly productive, and values-based organizations that hire people who are passionate about their organizations, business, and provide them opportunities to grow; make them feel valued and respected; and align technology solutions with

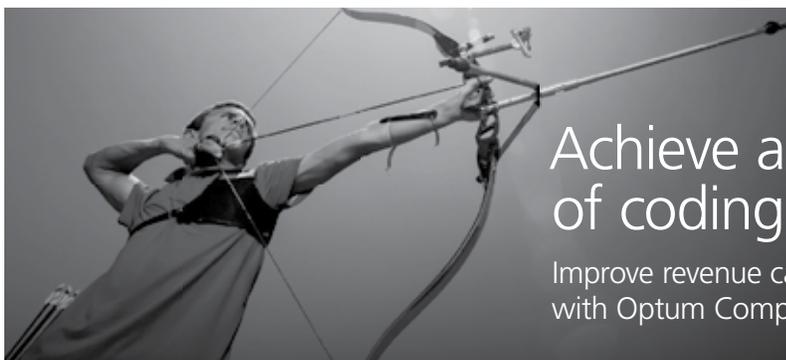
business goals to arm the organization and individual employee with business knowledge.

The demands of our U.S. health system and the advancements of technologies within our society are providing us with more and more data. Managing through the data and selecting the correct technologies to harvest and mine the data for business and market intelligence requires strong technology leadership that starts at the top, ensuring that all employees of their radiology group understand the business of radiology. 



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