

Introduction

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

—Niccolo Machiavelli, 1513

NO ONE CAN deny that the US health industry is in a state of upheaval. Rising costs of care, limited access, variable coverage, and less-than-optimal health outcomes have become catchphrases typifying the industry. While efforts are being made to address these challenges and respond to shifting government regulations, they have resulted in mostly patchwork solutions that are reactive and focused on the short term. As such, the impact is often less than ideal and often ineffective. Meanwhile, demand for services continues to grow as the population ages and chronic (and costly) diseases continue to exert pressure on the industry.

These challenges are just some of what we'll address in this book. One of our key messages is that to make any truly meaningful change, we need to think very differently about how we approach the business of healthcare—we must adopt a broader purpose. By that we mean a different—and much bigger—focus on promoting wellness. We are suggesting a shift from *healthcare* to *health* and

care. And because care, while important, is a relatively small factor in population health, we believe working across the overall health ecosystem—a body of interconnected stakeholders—will advance the shared mission of improving the health of populations.

As we try to find methods to better align and focus on health across the sectors of the industry, the leadership demands will continue to rise and become ever more challenging. That’s the environment we’re in, and the benefits that can be attained by working together and across boundaries are vital to the solution.

Marc Scheinrock and colleagues (2016) refer to “predictive maintenance and keeping people well.” They suggest that while an emphasis on wellness helps to keep people focused on their personal health, it also has the potential to improve bottom lines. In helping to drive up the quality of life, organizations can leverage cost reductions, with the results being healthier individuals *and* an improved return on investment (ROI). Improved population health can be viewed as an ongoing shared-value proposition—a cause and effect that can engender continuous improvements in ROI (exhibit I.1).

Exhibit I.1: Shared-Value Proposition and ROI

Costs



Quality of life

The role that leaders play in aligning organizations toward the common goal of keeping the population healthy is at the center of this book. Strong partnerships across multiple industry sectors are critical in dealing with the various forces that have the potential to push things in the wrong direction, and we are actively seeking to encourage connections and dialogue across sectors and among stakeholders. We will espouse an ecosystem view and demonstrate that, done well, this perspective can help make some very significant differences in overall population health—in the right direction.

We believe an ecosystem perspective is vital given the myriad issues the industry currently faces. It sets the stage for dealing with tensions and conflicts that occur between sectors, whether they're providers and payers, physicians and hospitals, pharmaceuticals and clinicians, or other permutations. There are significant differences in the structure, organizational strategy, and work processes across the various health sectors that need to be addressed, and the ecosystem approach provides a framework for how we can lead the industry to be both efficient and effective.

We are confident that an ecosystem approach will create innovation and scalable solutions that are simply not possible when working only in sector silos. To go beyond those boundaries, the challenge is how to capitalize on shared interests while, at the same time, tending to the interests of each organization or sector. This equilibrium requires each set of players to think about what's most critical to them, what's less important, and what can be done differently to achieve a common purpose.

With such balancing and leveraging, there's an opportunity to begin to create new and different operating systems collectively. As we have already stated, establishing these to achieve the shared goals of the health ecosystem requires diverse organizations to reach agreements that support their efforts to work together. As stated by Mark R. Kramer and Mark W. Pfitzer (2016), while it is critical, this proposition is not simple:

Even corporations once known for a hard-nosed approach have embarked on significant shared value initiatives. But as they pursue shared value strategies, businesses inevitably face barriers at many turns.

No company operates in isolation; each exists in an ecosystem where societal conditions may curtail its markets and restrict the productivity of its suppliers and distributors. Government policies present their own limitations, and cultural norms also influence demand.

These conditions are beyond the control of any company—or of any single actor. To advance shared value efforts, therefore, businesses must foster and participate in multisector coalitions—and for that, they need a new framework.

Such a framework is at the heart of this book; in developing our thinking, we have been struck by how the complexity of being able to work and lead multisector partnerships rises significantly. How do you take the competencies and capabilities that have enabled leaders to be successful in their own organizations and spread them across a much more complex environment, where shared history, values, or mission don't yet exist?

As Kramer and Pfitzer (2016) suggest, the common denominator is the creation of shared value. The pathway is the mind-set and skill set that leaders need to develop and use to establish the conditions for *real* success. It's all about seemingly disparate organizations working together in different ways, engaging with each other in pursuit of a common vision. Because the diversity and competing interests of the involved players increases, pursuit of the vision gets harder and creates a pressing need for new and distinctly different leadership skills.

In this book, we offer an introduction to and explanation of our framework—our *health ecosystem leadership model* (HELM). This model has been developed over the past few years and is based on

what we have learned from our work with health industry leaders who have been the pioneers of an ecosystem approach. It is their hard-won successes that have driven our learning.

These leaders foster what we refer to as an *ecosystem mind-set*—an understanding of the importance of bringing together traditionally disparate organizations from the different health sectors to create shared, innovative health solutions. Throughout the book, you will see quotes from personal interviews we conducted with leaders who provide great examples of ecosystem leadership in action. They collectively demonstrate how they have sought to implement the solutions we advocate and help corroborate our model.

This ecosystem mind-set is well illustrated by Craig Samitt, MD, MBA, current CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and former executive vice president and chief clinical officer at Anthem, Inc., a health insurance company headquartered in Indiana. Craig notes:

All players in the ecosystem share the goal of providing higher quality, more accessible, more affordable care to the people we serve. Everyone talks about that as an aspiration, but there are very few organizations that have executed upon it because execution of the Triple Aim to some extent requires reinvention of each of the players.

It feels that all the distinct players in the ecosystem have done what they can do within their world to drive industry change. Unless we begin to see partnerships with shared accountability and coordination of functions across the various players, we're not going to advance to the next level. It's time for a new model.

Our overall perspective is drawn from many decades of experience working as executives in various sectors of the health industry, in addition to our depth of expertise designing talent strategies to execute business strategy. Having developed the model, we felt

compelled to share it. That is our reason for writing this book—if you’re reading it, then you too believe in the need for the ecosystem approach.

We present our HELM model and practical suggestions for how to develop health ecosystem leadership to allow you and your fellow executives to collaborate across sectors effectively. We’ve defined the required skill sets and put forth recommendations for how to develop and use these skills. Among other things, you will learn how to

- recognize the essential building blocks of cross-sector leadership,
- develop your leadership behaviors to create the pathways for building cross-sector partnerships,
- collaborate effectively with others and demonstrate the HELM behaviors in pursuit of common goals, and
- establish measures for success to guide and assess the benefit of action.

Having set the stage, we hope you find immense value in the pages to follow. After reading this book, we hope you will share our ideas and recommendations with leaders in your organization, your sector, and your broader health ecosystem. Our industry needs a good deal of help and support if it is to make the progress needed toward the changes that are essential, and we believe that, through this book, we offer much toward these vital goals.

To your success and the health and wellness of our country,

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