



CANADA'S HEALTH  
INFORMATICS ASSOCIATION



**Shelagh Maloney**

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# e-Health 2008: Rules of Engagement

**O**verture, dim the lights, this is it, the night of nights... Do you remember Bugs Bunny and his friends singing this tune every Saturday morning before Elmer Fudd embarked on another attempt to get "that wascally wabbit" or Sylvester was outwitted, yet again, by Tweety Bird? Well, at the COACH office we feel like Bugs and his friends. We, along with our partners at the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), have been working hard over the last several months preparing for our annual e-Health conference.

*e-Health 2008: Extending the Reach* will be held in Vancouver May 4-7 this year. Over the last several weeks, the conference buzz has been mounting in anticipation of our biggest, best conference to date. Travel arrangements have been made, accommodation has been booked and dinner and lunch plans have been finalized.

Like Bugs, we are about to draw the curtain. We, the conference presenters, exhibitors, sponsors, organizers and hosts, have been working hard to put on a great show for you. I know that you will be impressed. Whether you are a first time *e-Health* attendee or whether you have not missed a conference since the first *e-Health* event in 2000, you will have a positive experience.

Having said that, there are several strategies that one can use to ensure a successful conference experience; I have outlined a few that you may want to consider as we head into *e-Health 2008*.

## Rule #1: Show Up

Now this rule sounds easy enough but it goes beyond just physically occupying space. If you have the good fortune of being able to attend the conference, then be present. Be engaged. I was preparing to run a marathon last fall and in my last training session my coach's parting advice to me was: "Keep your head in the game." Good

advice for marathons and for conferences. Stay focused, keep your head in the game and your conference experience will be that much richer for it.

## Rule #2: Get Out

Rule #2 is very similar to rule #1 but is important enough to merit its own space. In this context "get out" means "get out of your hotel room." I have found that there are an increasing number of people who travel long distances to attend conferences and then spend two to three days in their hotel rooms working. Why?! Enough said – get out.

## Rule #3: Expect to be Dazzled

One Saturday morning I was listening to an Australian public radio show on CBC. It was very early. (That running thing again.) The show was about rational and irrational behaviour and how our expectations influence how we act and react. In one experiment that the guest described, college students were asked to sample two different kinds of beer and choose the one they liked best. Unbeknownst to them, one pint had balsamic vinegar added to it. Surprisingly, almost all of the students selected the beer/vinegar brew over the straight beer in the taste test. In the second round, the students were put through the same exercise but in this round they were informed that they were drinking beer and beer/vinegar. This time almost all of the students hated the beer/vinegar combination because they expected to dislike it.

All this to say that you will likely get out of the conference what you expect to get out of it. Expect to be dazzled...and you will be.

## Rule #4: Shake it Up

You can do rule #4 two ways – literally, by shaking it up on the dance floor or figuratively by shaking up

your routine and doing something out of the ordinary. This rule is about being social. It is about starting a conversation with the stranger sitting beside you at one of the sessions. It is about attending one of the many social networking opportunities which have been planned for you. It is about meeting new people with new ideas and sharing experiences. Undoubtedly one of the most important indicators of a successful conference experience will be your ability to shake it up.

“On with the show, this is it...!”. ●

*e-Health 2008 marks the end of my term as COACH President. I would like to take this opportunity to salute you for your creativity, your energy and your passion. The health informatics community is truly transforming the way we deliver health care in Canada. Each of us is contributing to this exciting change. We should be proud.*

*Finally, thank you for your continued support of COACH. We are a strong association with a proud history and a very bright and promising future. I look forward to our continued success and encourage your continued support.*

### Editor's Note:

I'm not known to be a person who claps a lot (just ask my children); if someone's done a good job, well, frankly that's what they are supposed to do – it's what's expected. It's a lousy trait to be stuck with, trust me.

Notwithstanding, I do believe that Shelagh is owed a curtain call!

Shelagh's presidency of COACH was enriched by some personal qualities that I admire very much: She has mastered the art of listening rather than being enthralled with the sound of her own voice; her agenda was solely in the interests of COACH; she led quietly with competence, passion, dignity, respect and Class – the latter is a rare quality not found often these days.

So, when you see her at eHealth, give her a personal “thank you” – she deserves it.

Steven A. Huesing  
Editor

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