



## Guest Editorial

# Are we coming of age... really?

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I have to admit that my heart was swelling with pride as I watched our Awards Gala evening unfold the other week. I was thinking it had been just three years ago that we had had the idea to publicly recognize those in the healthcare informatics industry who have demonstrated leadership and results. That we had brought COACH and CHITTA together to try something new; to host an expensive black-tie dinner where we would honour those among us who have excelled in their field. And here we were at our third annual Gala with over 325 industry leaders celebrating success. I was, I trust deservedly, proud.

This was made even more so by the fact that just the night before at the 15th annual CIPA awards dinner, one third of all nominations for these multi-sector awards had been received from healthcare, and two of the top awards had been bestowed on healthcare entries. Cancer Care Ontario had beaten out the banks, insurance companies, telcos and retail firms to capture the diamond award (the “best in show”) for Ontario’s wait times information system. And our very own Richard Alvarez was one of only two inducted into CIPA’s Hall of Fame, a great honour given to but a few exemplary leaders in the informatics field nationally.

And here at our own Awards celebration, CHITTA was giving top awards to global industry giants; IBM and Accenture; international software company Initiate Systems; and all this alongside Canadian small businesses CLINICARE and Borden Ladner Gervais. COACH was recognizing individuals who had given a career to the industry and those who were emerging as leaders in the field.

As a highlight to the evening, we had created a new award; a Lifetime Achievement Award. And who more fitting to receive the first, and maybe only one, but Steven Huesing, the father of both COACH and CHITTA. He, like many of us was emotional as he listened to testimonials (and roasts) from his industry colleagues choreographed beautifully by the “Hall of Famer” himself. Having given 43 years to our industry, Steven has almost contributed more than the rest of us combined! It truly was the most fitting of awards.

Yes, I was feeling pretty good...

So why is it that there is always something to bring a person down to earth?

I started to become more aware of the event itself. The Emcee (another new thing we had tried this year) was really bad! If his shtick was not bad enough, his dress-up routines as Elvis and Richard Simmons took it to a new low. Then there was the slow service, and the long speeches, and .... the whole thing was unravelling. It was then that it dawned on me that despite how far we have come as an industry, we have yet to truly mature. We had had two years of very professional Galas, yet we seemed to think we needed to “lighten” things up this year. I guess not all ideas are good ideas!

When I posed the question in the title it was designed to make us think that “coming of age” is not a point-in-time event, like the Awards Galas of the other week. But rather a state of mind in the industry; a state of professionalism in all things we do, and most importantly consistency over time. The good hockey/football/baseball teams are not just good in one game; they are good in every game. That is what defines the best; that is what defines maturity; and that is what defines professionalism.

So I guess the compelling thought I am left with after the events of the other week, is that regardless of how far we had come, we still had a ways to go to institutionalize professionalism in our industry. That we cannot rest on our laurels after a success. That we must continue to strive to improve. That we should try new things, but not with wild abandon anymore. That we must learn from our mistakes and not make the same ones twice. And that we must always remember that the higher we go, the further it is to fall.

If this editorial sounds like I am discouraged, I can assure you I am not. I am just humbled as I realize that the steps we take are just that; steps on a long and never-ending journey - a journey that will end in a mature industry if we are diligent, consistent and perform consistently well over time.

And that, my colleagues, requires all of us to work together to the same standards. But that’s another subject .... ●