



Shelagh Maloney

Shelagh Maloney is the President of COACH: Canada's Health Informatics Association



The Killer App

In my relatively new role as COACH President I have had the opportunity to speak to many of you about the association. Discussions have been formal and informal, in small groups, large fora and one-on-one. Inevitably discussions come around to the vision for COACH. I am often asked what I hope to achieve in my term as President; what will be my 'legacy'?

I imagine that wanting to change the world and leave your mark in some way, is a goal to which many of us aspire. Within our respective domains or spheres of influence we each want to be able to point to something and say "I played a role in creating this" or "this is my contribution". I am no exception to this rule and, in fact given my leadership position within COACH feel some pressure to do something great for COACH - to unveil the 'killer app' as it were.

In this vein I am initially somewhat embarrassed to state that my priority and the effort of the Board of Directors has been focused and will continue in the short term to be focused on organizational capacity. This is not the thing of which headlines are made. Addressing organizational capacity is not going to cause our membership to stand up and cheer and pledge undying allegiance...and it's definitely not the 'killer app'. In fact, if done well many of the organizational changes that are being implemented will be transparent to our members.

But, in reality, I offer no apologies. In fact, I would suggest that putting the governance and management structure in place that will ensure strong and consistent leadership of COACH is our most critical task at this time. Strong parallels are not lost on me.

As a health informatics community our goal is to build a high quality, sustainable health system. To this end, much of our work to date has been focused on building the foundational pieces that will get us to our goal. While the networks, the data standards and the client/provider registries are not the 'killer apps', they are critical to achieving the promises of e-health. We, COACH and we, the health informatics community, must build a consistent, robust infrastructure to support the transformational change that we are undertaking.

To this end, COACH has made a number of organizational changes that will strengthen our organizational capacity and ensure that we have infrastructure that will evolve as we evolve. At the governance level, four new Board members were announced at COACH's Annual General Meeting last spring. (It's worth noting that an unprecedented number of candidates stood for election to the Board). Individually and collective, this is a very strong Board. The level of experience, enthusiasm and commitment is tremendous.

At the management level, we have created a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) position. It was evident during strategic planning activities last year that COACH has reached the point in its evolution that warranted a full time executive staff position. To this end Don Newsham was announced as COACH CEO in September (see the announcement in this issue of the journal). Already we've seen the difference that having a dedicated resource has made in our ability to move the agenda forward and increase the pace of progress. Don will focus his attention on ensuring that the strategic priorities of the Board are operationalized.

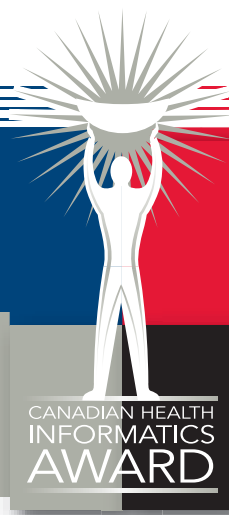
Joining Don on the association management team is Renee Levine, COACH's new Executive Director. Renee along with her team at Base Consulting is COACH's new association management firm. With extensive association management experience and expertise in providing strategic direction, Renee will work with Don and the Board of Directors, while naturally ensuring that the back office runs smoothly.

Finally, a membership review is being undertaken to strengthen the value proposition for COACH and to

ensure that members are engaged to the level that they wish to engage. It was Karl Marx who said "nothing can have value without being an object of utility". What can COACH do to ensure that your membership in the association provides utility, and therefore value to you? And likewise, what can you do to ensure that your membership in COACH provides utility, and therefore value, to you?

What's the "killer app"? ●

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President

Shelagh Maloney
Canada Health Infoway
Toronto, ON
Tel: 416-595-3449 x 3061
Email: smaloney@infoway-inforoute.ca

President-elect

Linda Miller
Alberta Health and Wellness
Edmonton, AB
Tel: 780-415-1501
Email: linda.miller@gov.ab.ca

Secretary-Treasurer

Alex Drossos
Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre /
McMaster University
Hamilton, ON
Tel: 905-399-9585
Email: coach@alexrossos.com

Directors

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Marion Lyver, Burlington, ON
Victor Taylor, Edmonton, AB
Michael Whitt, Calgary, ON

Chief Executive Officer

Don Newsham, COACH National Office
250 Consumers Road, Suite 301
Toronto, ON M2J 4V6
Tel: 416-494-9324
Toll Free: 1-888-253-8554
Email: dnewsham@coachorg.com

Executive Director

Renee Levine, COACH National Office
250 Consumers Road, Suite 301
Toronto, ON M2J 4V6
Tel: 416-494-9324
Toll Free: 1-888-253-8554
Email: rlevine@coachorg.com

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