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July 31, 2019

Two Heads Aren't Better Than One When It Comes To Medical Group Leadership

Decisive leadership is what's needed, so, of course, many healthcare entities seemingly go out of their way to self-sabotage their future.

Harken back to a childhood party: the three-legged race. Contestants are paired up, standing side by side, with the left leg of one runner tied to the right leg of his or her partner.

Ready! Set! Try to run! Fall.

The same sort of stupid, don't want to hurt anyone's feelings, two heads must be better than one sort of thinking hampers medical groups, hospital systems, and other healthcare businesses.

Take, for example, the recent story of the collapse of the co-CEO structure adopted by Advocate Aurora Health. Upon its creation by way of the merger of two Midwestern health systems, Aurora Health Care and Advocate Health Care, the CEOs of both constituent entities were appointed as co-CEOs of the combined healthcare system.

For 18 months, leadership flailed like two preteens in a three legged race.

"Let's go right!" "Let's go left!"

"Enough about 'going left,' we're letting *you* go!" That is, one of the co-CEOs has now, *ahem*, "left" to pursue other interests. (Like, perhaps, unemployment.)

Small medical groups often go for some of this silliness because the group's so small, everyone "must" be involved. Must is, of course, just an opinion. The fact, however, is that if everyone's a leader, no one's a leader.

You magnify the inability to make decisive decisions for your medical group's future when you (or your group's leaders) legs are tied to someone else.

Not only is it impossible to make fast and decisive decisions, the co-CEO model comes preloaded with the excuse that *the other guy* made the stupid decision, or refused to sign on to any decision.

And, on top of that, it's a set-up for a tragedy of the commons-like situation: Each "leader" thinks that he or she doesn't have to act because the other will take care of it. Or not.

No matter what you call them, "co-CEOs," "two-in-a-box," "diptychs," they are all three-legged race teams that tie your future up in knots.

[Let's do a governance audit.](#)



Wisdom. Applied. 128 - Driverless Cars and the Death of Hospitals

I've yet to see a driverless car, but I bet that it's headed to the funeral of some hospital.

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Standing ahead of me in line at the small town BBQ joint were a couple from even farther out of town than I was, maybe from Minnesota (don't you know).

"How's the barbecue chicken?" Ms. Midwesterner queried.

"The best in town!" exclaimed the woman behind the counter.

"How's your coleslaw?"

Once again, the woman behind the counter exclaimed with even more gusto, "The best in town!"

Maybe they were, but there's a much better question, "What else *is* in town?"

My guess is nothing, and certainly no place that sells either barbecue chicken or coleslaw.

Comparing ourselves to the local competition works only so long as there's only local competition.

But when competition comes in from out of town, it's likely that sooner or later there will be better coleslaw or, at least, an understanding of what better coleslaw is.

Of course, coleslaw outside of the actual BBQ joint is just a placeholder for what you do.

In today's healthcare world, you can be certain that the competition will never simply be local.

The "best in town" isn't saying much.



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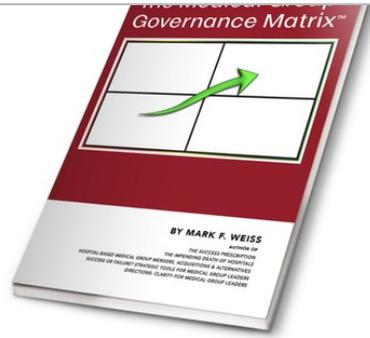
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We all hear, and most of us say, that the pace of change in healthcare is quickening. That means that the pace of required decision-making is increasing, too. Unless, that is, you want to take the “default” route. That’s the one in which you let someone else make the decisions that impact you; you’re just along for the ride. Of course, playing a bit part in scripting your own future isn’t the smart route to stardom. But despite your own best intentions, perhaps it’s your medical group’s governance structure that’s holding you back. In fact, it’s very likely that the problem is systemic. The Medical Group Governance Matrix introduces a simple four-quadrant diagnostic tool to help you find out. It then shows you how to use that tool to build your better, more profitable future. Get your free copy [here](#).



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