



Collaboration
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Staying Informed

Ideas, Information, and Perspectives In
the New Health Care World

Dec. 2010
Volume 3
Issue 12

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A Review of 2010- Another Tough One

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"2010 was an election year. Last December we wrote that "many existing elected officials will be looking for new opportunities." We were right on that one."

We want to wish everyone a blessed Holiday and a prosperous New Year. This is a good time to step back and appreciate the many blessings we have. Despite all the challenges we face, we live in a wonderful country that provides us with amazing opportunities. The opportunities are still there, you just have to look harder to find them.

Last year was tough but we weren't really surprised. We had anticipated 2010 to be more of a stabilizing year for the economy; we didn't expect it to be a turnaround year. While the unemployment numbers remain unacceptably high, the fundamentals of the economy are better than they were when we started the year. The economy is still fragile and will bounce up and down with whatever happens around the globe and what we decide to do with our debt. The debt we have built-up over the past ten years is a huge concern not only for next year but for many years in the future. The decisions we make to address it will likely determine how prosperous we become in the future- what we finally decide to do with health care is a big part of it.

We expected consumers to be cautious and skeptical. While consumer spending will likely increase in 2011, consumers will continue to be cautious and skeptical until the unemployment numbers improve and the economy starts showing some signs of real growth again. That may take awhile.

2010 was an election year. In anticipation of the election environment, last December we wrote that "many (elected officials) will be looking for new opportunities." We were right on that one. In 2011 we will begin an entirely different legislative direction on many fronts. Hopefully, we can start to bring this country together to work on the many challenges facing our nation instead of focusing on political ideologies and the influence of lobbyists. We can only hope.

Last year at this time we also wrote that we were seriously questioning the direction Congress was taking with health care reform. At that time, the attention had moved to the "public option" and insurance reform instead of on the inefficiencies and inequities on the delivery side that costs our health care system billions of dollars each year. While the PPACA (health care reform) may not please everyone, at least we now recognize we need to fix the mess we have in order to fix our economy. Fixing health care remains on the agenda.

We expect 2011 to be better than 2010 but not nearly where it needs to be or should be. The recent tax legislation may provide a little bump in 2011 but not much. Until we get the consumers back in the game we've got a long haul ahead. But, we'll get through it.

We've done it before, we'll do it again. We'll need to work together better than we did in 2010 to make it happen.

Health Care 2011: Cogs or Linchpins?

Unfortunately, we're going to keep fighting about health care in 2011. The legal challenges will continue in the courts and with the new Congress it is uncertain how much of what is planned for 2011 in the legislation will actually be funded. Some will continue to call for repeal of the entire law which will only add to the confusion of the general population. We all know the Supreme Court will end up making the final decision concerning the constitutionality of portions of the law. The legal process will take awhile. In the meantime, we'll need to be open to new ideas and keep moving ahead. Going back to where we were is simply not an option- we can't afford it.

Last year we made the following predictions for 2010:

1. The government is going to be involved so get used to it.
2. Partisan turf protection will give way to more collaboration between stakeholders
3. Technology is going to get a lot of emphasis (not just medical technology but technologies to improve data collection and delivery efficiency as well)
4. New business models for care delivery will develop
5. Consumers will take on a new role

All of these occurred; just not in ways we had hoped.

The government became much too involved and the process used to create the legislation and communicate it was atrocious. However, the private sector needs to take some of the heat as well. The various health care stakeholders (providers, health plans, employers, pharmaceuticals, medical device, unions, and others) were never able to come together enough to submit a viable alternative. Everybody needs to give to fix the problem. It's tough to give when you think you're getting the shaft in the process.

Along those lines there was some improvement in the collaboration between some of the stakeholders; particularly some of the provider groups, health plans, and large employers. However, the turf protection is still a big part of how health care works today. Until that disappears and until trust becomes a larger part of the system, real win/win collaborations are going to be difficult to achieve.

While improving the technology in health care improved, the process hasn't been easy and it's been expensive. It is imperative for health care at all levels improve communication and efficiency. We are spending millions of dollars each year unnecessarily simply because of the continued use of paper, fragmented communication, and the inability of different systems to talk together (interoperability). In addition, using technology to collect data and information will be more important than ever if we're ever going to move toward the "value based" delivery approach we hope to create.

New business models started to develop in 2010. Medical homes, Accountable Care Organizations, and other innovations started to change the relationships between the stakeholders. This has been a challenge. As we've noted, working together has never been a strong point of the system we have today.

And, consumers started to assume a new role in the process. Unfortunately, the health care system has done little to help them assume their new roles. Incentives and penalties may help but will not create the lasting changes that are going to be required to improve the engagement and participation of the individual. Consumer engagement will be critical.

These 5 predications are still applicable for 2011. We will add three more:

6. Unfortunately, we will continue to argue and debate the PPACA in 2011 which will only create more obstacles and barriers instead of solutions. Hopefully we'll keep making progress in the important areas (with or without the PPACA) while the judicial process runs its course.
7. Health care costs will continue to increase. We don't expect much progress "bending the cost curve" in health care in 2011. Many will use this as another example to support their calls for repeal of PPACA. We believe it is more a

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What We're Going To Need In 2011

2011 (continued from page 2)

function of the expensive, fragmented, and partisan environment we have created over the years. As we all know, in order to accomplish anything as a group you need to have everybody on-board and singing from the same song book. As long as everyone continues to fight and bicker, making real change happen is going to be tough. In the meantime, the costs of health care will continue to rise.

8. Health Wellness and Prevention will continue to be the “buzz words.” Fixing our health care problem is a cultural issue as well as a systemic one. We need to get more people engaged and involved in its solution if we’re ever going to make any real change. Improving engagement and participation will be a key.

The Decisions for Health Care in 2011: Cogs or Linchpins?

In Seth Godin’s book “Linchpin” he talks about how much our world has changed. Over the years our culture has been programmed into thinking the 9 to 5 job with the policy manuals, the regular paycheck, and following the rules established by others is the path to success. The path was safe and secure. It didn’t require a lot of thinking or innovation. You just needed to keep your nose clean, follow the rules, do your job, and you will be ok. As a result, Godin feels most have simply become easily replaceable cogs in the factory-oriented system we have created- “where organized labor meets patient capital, productivity-improving devices, and leverage.”

Then the world changed. The security is gone, the policy manuals don’t reflect the realities of the world, and now, more than ever, we need new ideas, new paths, and new ways of doing things. The map most people followed doesn’t apply any more.

Linchpins are those people who see the world different. They are the people who view their work as art and don’t need a map established by others to accomplish their goals. They see opportunities when others see obstacles. They view their work as a gift and don’t necessarily expect anything in return. They are passionate in what they do because they believe in their hearts that what they do makes a difference.

Especially with the challenges we’re going to face in 2011 we’re going to need more linchpins than cogs in healthcare. We’re going to need the passion that linchpins bring to break down the silos that have been built over the years and begin to work together in new ways. We’ll need the linchpins to create the culture of collaboration that is going to be required to build trust in a system that has become distrustful and protective of individual interests. We’ll need the linchpin’s thinking to create ways to engage all stakeholders with ideas beyond incentives, gifts, money, policy development, and ROI.

Health care will require more leaders, not followers. Instead of being surrounded by “bureaucrats, note takers, literalists, manual readers, TGIF laborers, map followers, and fearful employees” (cogs), we need to be surrounded by people that are willing to take the risks to explore new ideas and new ways of thinking (linchpins). As similarly defined by Bill George in his book Authentic Leadership, these are people who are “motivated by mission- not money, tap into their values- not their ego, connect with others through their heart- not their persona, and live their lives with discipline and purpose.”

Yes, 2011 will be another challenging one in health care. It may be more challenging than 2010 because the clock is ticking. The time is running out. We certainly have a choice. We can either continue to tinker around the edges as cogs to try to make improvements by thinking the way we always have. Or, we can become linchpins to make the truly radical changes that are going to be required to finally address the challenges we face in health care to create a system our country is capable of creating- and America deserves.

We think the choice is obvious. Happy Holidays

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What Makes Linchpins Indispensable

- ✓ Provides a unique interface between members of an organization
- ✓ Delivers unique creativity
- ✓ Manages situations or organizations of great complexity
- ✓ Leads customers
- ✓ Inspires staff
- ✓ Provides deep domain knowledge
- ✓ Possesses a unique talent



Exceptional Book:
Linchpin; Are You Indispensable
 Seth Godin
 Penguin Group; 2010

Check Our Web Site, Our Partners, and Join Our Collaboration Health Network

Our goal is to help improve the understanding of how health care works so we make the decisions to help it work better- for everyone. We've collected over 150 studies, positions, essays, and articles from a variety of different and diverse sources to provide an easy-to-use and balanced resource on a number of health care topics. We've designed it for consumers and professionals to support an informed perspective of the issues and challenges facing health care today.

Also check out our growing list of partners similarly committed to help improve the way health care works. From wellness programs, to claims technology, to internet applications, to nutritional counseling; our partners provide the services that are going to be required for providers, consumers, employers, and other organizations to participate in the new health care landscape that is unfolding.

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Something to Think About

“Watch your step when you immediately know the one way to do anything. Nine times out of ten, there are several better ways.”

William B. Given, Jr.

“The quest for certainty blocks the search for meaning. Uncertainty is the very condition to impel man to unfold his powers.”

Erich Fromm