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## Excuse Me, Are You a Thought Leader?

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It has been some time since I wrote an "Excuse Me" article but I feel strongly for this topic, hence the urge to dispel the associated myths and misconceptions.

This morning, while enjoying coffee with a friend, he mentioned that there is an IT Company looking for someone who is a "Thought Leader" in the healthcare space and I would fit the bill perfectly. He was informed by the IT Company that the "Thought Leader" must be able to find out the type of solutions hospitals (their clients) wants and this is very important as the IT Company wants to develop their products accordingly.

I was quite amused by the definition provided by the IT Company; it is at best describing basic Market Research, not Thought Leadership.

The problem is, there are many "Thought Leaders" in the healthcare space doing just that and it is causing a lot of problems for both the industry and Venture Capitalists (who burnt a lot of cash on pseudo-Health IT startups due to bad advice). So how can one identify the "real McCoy"?

### IT in Healthcare versus Health Informatics

It is actually very difficult for the layman (including medical professionals) to discern between IT Professionals and Health Informaticians. To make the problem worst, the ratio of IT Professionals in the healthcare industry versus true blue Health Informaticians has the former leading by a ginormous gap and many of these IT Professionals actually call themselves "Health Informaticians".

There is however, a fundamental difference in how both groups go about trying to solve healthcare problems. IT Professionals in healthcare tends to ask "Tell me what you want and I will do/fix it for you", Health Informaticians however, would ask "Describe the problem/obstacle you face and I will try to develop a solution/rectification for it".

As you can observe, IT professionals working in healthcare usually implement solutions to fix symptoms, simply because they do not understand [How Health Informatics is Different](#), Health Informaticians however, optimize existing resources, redefine [workflow](#) and utilize technology (including health Informatics Standards) to achieve quality, meaningful care. Health Informaticians are trained to [Achieve Transformational Care](#), not put a Band-Aid to symptoms.

To have IT Professionals in healthcare asking End-users (be it a Nurse or a Physician) to "tell me what you want and I will do/fix it for you" is akin to having Physicians asking Patients "tell me what you want and I will operate/prescribe it for you". Patients most probably "don't know what they don't know", so how can they instruct the Physicians what to do? The same goes for the End-users - and this is why we hear of so many failed Health IT projects (e.g. EMRs, Clinical Information Systems etc.), we have too many IT Professionals in healthcare performing the roles of Health Informaticians.

## Both Group Plays a Role

Now you might walk away thinking that one group is better than the other - that is a dangerous misnomer. It is important to understand that both IT Professionals and Health Informaticians play a role in the healthcare industry; the same applies for IT Companies and Health Informatics Company. The crux lies in using them for the right purposes.

## So, what is a Thought Leader?

I can't make sweeping statements that defines what a "Thought Leader" should be like for each and every industry, however, for the IT Company looking for a real Thought Leader in the healthcare space, consider someone who can identify what the hospitals (their clients) truly need as oppose to what they want.

Of course, there will always be rouge IT Professionals in healthcare deliberately passing themselves off as Health Informaticians and by reading this article, they might actually be wiser since they now know how real Health Informaticians start their diagnosis.

Unfortunately, there are no cookie cutter solutions for decision makers but if help is needed in this area, consider utilizing binaryHealthCare as an enabler to you and your organization's success.

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