

Horsing Around in Healthcare

Healthcare reminds me of the wild and wooly west. An environment where individualism lead the way, where law and order were not standardized, and where greed put white against red, cattle against sheep, and ranchers against farmers. In part, people built the west on the back of the horse and the similarity stops there because few healthcare providers show good horse riding ability. Knowing when to dismount a dead horse may be a simple thing to decide, however, many healthcare executives remain in the saddle, waiting for their horse to rise and carry them off as in yesteryears. What I really find alarming is the number of healthcare executives and physicians who never admit their horse is dead, let alone terminally ill. Instead, these diehard riders of the healthcare sage, while waiting for the miracle of life, revert to a spin-off of creative financing-creative horsemanship. They pursue:

Investing in a bigger saddle.

Using a stronger whip.

Trying a new bit.

Switching riders as necessary.

Moving the horse to a new location.

Appointing a committee to study the horse's lack of movement.

Arranging to visit other healthcare providers who ride dead horses more efficiently.

Lowering the standards for riding dead horses.

Creating a test for measuring their riding ability verses their horse's immobility.

Comparing their dead horse to another's dead horse.

Hiring a new horse trainer.

Rationalizing how they are riding now, with how they rode in the past.

Creating a new style of riding more appropriate for riding dead horses.

Tightening the cinch so the saddle does not fall off.

Painting the dead horse another color.

Switching to a less demanding path.

Blaming the horse's breeders for its lack of mobility.

Denying they own a horse let alone a dead one.

Spurring their dead horse, faster and harder.

Selling their dead horse to another healthcare provider less experienced in riding horses.

Healthcare horses come in many different shapes, sizes, and colors, but dead horses all look alike, even to the untrained eye, i.e., lifeless. You will find that your stable is full of horses of many different colors, such as: your products, your services, your policies, your employees, your processes, your procedures, your alliances, and your attitude. One needs to know when to dismount a dead horse for the betterment of the rider and the team. An old adage states, "Together, a dead horse and its rider go nowhere fast."

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