



Innovation, Investment and Improving Healthcare: People Powered Partnerships

Posted by Joseph Fournier

Recently, I was fortunate to attend [VCapital's](#) Future of Medicine event in Chicago. Attendees heard from Harvard Medical School scientists who are shaping the future of health care around the world. Topics included the latest research on the human genome, which many consider to be the key to the future of medicine, and profiles of several startup companies that have emerged from the school's labs. The evening drew a diverse audience – health care practitioners, social policy leaders and investors.

Sitting and socializing with many venture capitalists and colleagues, I began to reflect on the future of health and wellness organizations--especially how the traditional boundaries are blurring between organizations such as hospitals, health systems and payers and new, entrepreneurial enterprises that are entering the health care marketplace. [Haven Health](#), [One Medical](#) and [Peloton](#) are just a few of the high growth health care companies that are playing a pivotal role in transforming the sector and improving people's lives. Considering the mission (and success) of each organization, I realized that they are—and must be--woven together by a common thread—a laser focus on *people*.

In his recent [article](#) titled "5 suggestions for technology companies, venture capitalists," Michael Dowling, President and CEO of New York based [Northwell Health](#), advised technology companies and venture capitalists to "embrace our humanity." He noted that "hospitals...are an ecosystem of humanity's highs, lows and in-betweens around the clock, every single day." Agreed! Health systems and venture capitalists must work together to invest in new technologies, research and care models designed to serve people and improve their health. Listen closely – there is a call to action for organizations to join forces, collaborate and work together that is rising to a crescendo.

People First

Over my years as a military officer, lawyer and human resources leader, the word "culture" has been part of the conversation so often that it became a ubiquitous term. Though, culture is powerful—it defines organizations—it is often a differentiator between the most successful organizations (those that thrive) and the ones that just get by (those that survive.) Culture is really quite simple. It is about people and their beliefs, behaviors and feelings.

So, how do companies from the provider, payer, private equity and venture capital communities—all with different missions, traditions, beliefs and industry behaviors--*really work together* to improve the overall health our county, our communities and our people?

By focusing on *people*—employees, customers and communities—first. A few tips:

1. **Put People First** - Understanding that the future of healthcare is about bettering humanity means we must put people and their well-being first. Tough decisions always require balancing financial, operational and people implications. Establishing people as your "true north" provides clear direction for decision-making.
2. **Respect Tradition and Be the Change** - Model core values and understand institutional histories as you lead your respective organizations. When working together, industry partners, investors and stakeholders must take the time to build rapport and understand the origin stories and missions of their organizations. Harness the collective energy and navigate the individual emotion of change by leading people forward toward a shared goal - better health for all. Remember, we're all in



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this together.

3. **Create Belonging** - One of my core beliefs is that every human being should have access to safe, high quality health care and have an equal opportunity to live a healthy life. By including everyone and working together, we can achieve greatness and harmony. Solving the challenge of health care inequity means creating an environment and culture where everyone's voice and contribution is heard, respected and valued. It requires a sense of belonging.
4. **Spotlight the Big Picture** – As companies work together, they must clearly articulate the problem they are solving (e.g., improving access to primary care, improving health outcomes for cancer patients, improving the health of a population). When people do not understand the shared objective and their individual impact, it nearly always results in a serious drag on an organization's performance. Lead by keeping people focused on the big picture and the organization's goals and vision for the future.

Partnering for Transformation

Personally, I'm fascinated by the new players in health care arena. Organizations are exploring new business models and technologies to keep people and communities healthy and care for them when they are sick. Fresh ideas and research findings emerge daily to help improve outcomes and solve the challenges incumbent in delivery of high quality health care. [One Medical](#), led by Amir Rubin, is shifting the paradigm on primary care through a tech-enabled, on-demand membership-based primary care practice. The company's focus on making quality care more accessible and enjoyable for all presents a distinctive and attractive offering to people in all age, wellness and income brackets. One Medical is a people focused business because it's "driven by a shared mission to transform healthcare by designing it around people's real lives."

Rubin, a former executive of UnitedHealth Group, said in a CNBC [Squawk Box](#) interview that the company's "goal is to delight millions of consumers and take out 10 percent of the U.S. health-care spend." Yet, One Medical cannot transform health care alone. As I think of how One Medical and other disruptive companies are partnering with other organizations to improve healthcare, I believe that working together and focusing on *people*—employees, customers and communities—is the key to our collective success and wellness.

What innovative leaders, companies and partnerships capture your attention? Drop me a note at fournierj@inveniaspartners.com to exchange ideas about how people and culture power discovery and improve health care for all.

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