

How Healthcare Revolutionaries Think

10 Questions With Ann Jordan

By David Burda
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Welcome to the latest installment of 4sight Health's series, [How Healthcare Revolutionaries Think](#). Our interview series profiles healthcare instigators who believe that outcomes matter, customers count and value rules.

At the start of my now 42-year career covering healthcare as a reporter, editor and writer, I worked for two healthcare trade associations. I can say without hesitation that neither of them believed outcomes mattered, customers counted or value ruled. Unless we're talking about association members. Then it all mattered, counted or ruled. One angry call from a miffed member sent dozens of staffers into a tizzy. Memos flew. Fingers pointed. Asses covered. Scapegoats found.

If I was going to live in constant fear or work with people who are continuously afraid, it was going to be from angry readers, not coworkers. I learned a lot about healthcare from both of the associations, and I also learned that I never wanted to work for one ever again.

Hearing about, learning about and ultimately speaking with Ann Jordan was refreshing to say the least. Jordan is the relatively new president and CEO of the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA), the industry professional association for CFOs and other healthcare finance, reimbursement and revenue cycle leaders.

Jordan joined HFMA in June 2023 and almost immediately embarked on a new journey for the HFMA. It was past time to steer the association in a new direction toward consumers and



away from accountants, toward value and away from volume, toward health and away from healthcare. I'm old enough to recall HFMA's patient-friendly billing initiative launched in 2000. If you've gotten a bill from your hospital or doctor or an explanation-of-benefits from your insurer lately, you know what happened. Not much.

Well, times have changed, and Jordan believed HFMA had to change with them. The culmination of that effort is something called [Vitalic Health](#). Vitalic Health is an operating unit within HFMA that's dedicated to driving the financial sustainability of

the healthcare system and improving outcomes for consumers. In a word, value, as in value rules. It intends to do that through research, a performance benchmarking institute, swarm studies and a payment model consortium. You can download Vitalic Health's draft of the U.S. Healthcare Vitals Tracker report [here](#). HFMA is set to release the final version nationally on Jan. 20, 2026.

I had an opportunity to speak with Jordan about her views of healthcare as someone from outside of the industry, the origin story of Vitalic Health and the superpowers she possesses and needs to pull this off.

You can also listen to my [podcast interview](#) with Jordan about her journey from law to quality standards to healthcare and how she differentiates HFMA from other healthcare associations.

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Ann, if you wrote up the definition of a healthcare revolutionary for a dictionary, if there are any dictionaries anymore, what would it say?

Jordan: U.S. healthcare is so unique, my response is going to be from within that context. As an outsider who came into healthcare, my belief is that an effective healthcare revolutionary at this time would be a human-centered, pragmatic visionary. Those words seem, at times, to be conflicted. But because of the nature of the healthcare system, I do believe they're appropriate.

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That's a three-part answer. Human-centered, pragmatic and visionary. Tell me about the human-centered part of a healthcare revolutionary.

Jordan: I see healthcare and maybe also education as unique "services" that, when you're in a capitalistic society, present a lot of risk if adopted appropriately. We're now at \$5 trillion of spend and counting. When you bring that much money into a capitalistic society, the human part can get lost very easily. From that revolutionary standpoint, human-centered needs to rise above it. That's such a major feat when you're competing in that environment.

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And the pragmatic part, if you want to be a human-centered healthcare revolutionary?

Jordan: At the end of the day, the cost of not doing this right is human lives. So, when you are going to be a revolutionary who's impactful, you have to be a pragmatist who understands that the vision must be scalable and sustainable. This isn't broken widgets. These are our communities. An element of being a revolutionary to be impactful is being someone who can actually deliver on the promise of being human-centered.

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The vision part. What's that all about? Are you seeing things differently than other people?

Jordan: Yes. Not only seeing things differently, but seeing things outside of the norms. You need to look beyond the existence of the system that we're in. There are so many talented people in healthcare who inherited this system. But the truth of the matter is that the system is already so destabilized that if you are going to be a revolutionary at the time we're in, you do need to understand it, but you need to look beyond its current parameters.

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Given your three-part definition, do you have a favorite healthcare revolutionary past or present who fits that description?

Jordan: If I need to pick someone who meets those standards, I'm giving it to the collective someone. The collective someone in the industry that got us through the pandemic. That's one instance where we set aside the norms of the system, we accelerated things, and the need to protect and preserve human lives in our communities was the priority. What this country and the world went through was so terrible. But it showed us what we're capable of and what we can accomplish when we need to do something to change the system we're in. When we think about change in healthcare, I know we can do it because we have done it. Hopefully, people will come together and do it again.

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You set the bar pretty high with your definition, making this next question a hard one now. Do you consider yourself a healthcare revolutionary?

Jordan: It is a hard question. It's hard to say you're a revolutionary when you're in a destabilized system. If you think of a revolutionary — Les Misérables, 'Do you hear the people sing?' and all that — nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come. When everyone agrees and is behind you, it's easy to move forward. I don't really see myself in that or healthcare in that because the system is already destabilized.

What I can bring to the table as maybe a reluctant revolutionary is helping convince people to try things a different way. Convince them as an outsider not beholden to the past. An outsider who's found herself humbly and gratefully in a leadership role at this moment. I want to embrace what I can do to advance the industry under our vision and mission at HFMA. I do believe what we are attempting to do, and what I've been tasked to do, is a bit revolutionary. But it shouldn't be.

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That's a perfect segue to my next question, and that's HFMA's [Vitalic Health](#) initiative. What's the origin story there? It's a big departure for a traditional trade association or membership society.



Jordan: It's been a journey. I'm an outsider coming in as the new CEO. You have to step back, figure out, one, what's going on, and two, where do we need to go. In early 2024, we formed the highest-powered task force we could to look at HFMA's strategic opportunities. We gathered data. We didn't necessarily know what we were after, but we were focused on the financial sustainability of the current healthcare system, the catalysts, driving macroeconomic forces, outcomes.

Amazing insights came out of that, including the fact that almost all the thought leaders we had around the table believed the current system was financially unsustainable. Half said we were at an existential tipping point that was going to hit us within the next three years. The majority thought whatever came next was going to be revolutionary versus evolutionary and dictated by forces outside rather than inside of the industry. Those who understand the current system the most were the least likely to change it.

Then, we had to ask ourselves what HFMA's obligation as the leading association for healthcare financial management in a financially unsustainable healthcare system facing extinction from external forces. It's some pretty heavy stuff. That's not an easy lane to get people to hold your hand and walk down it with you. Out of that process, which we called Healthy Futures, came this initiative that we call [Vitalic Health](#).

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It's scary to ask people to go down that path with you. It's even scarier for the people you ask to go down that path. How did you get them to hold your hand? I know you have a degree in psychology.

Jordan: I do. Every day, you just have to adjust. The other thing that has been unique about my career trajectory is I've often been the first and/or only woman, usually always the first, in a traditionally male-dominated industry and leadership room. This goes back to being from Iowa, where there are very few female executives let alone female leaders. I had to learn early how to be taken seriously. I was usually not only the only woman but the youngest person in the room.

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How did you learn early on how to be taken seriously?

Jordan: A big part of being taken seriously is you have to bring data. If you have the data and you believe in the data, your argument will advance regardless of whether you're the first woman, only woman, the youngest person. A big part of why we started with the Healthy Futures task force was to gather up the data to quantify the environment that we were in and the opportunity that lies before us.

The other reality that comes into play is healthcare is not stable. Healthcare associations are threatened by competition that hasn't existed in the past, mostly from the for-profit sector after our traditional and core areas like training, education and events. Pick your favorite. They're trying to replicate what we do. Our challenge was to say, "Now is the time for us to become more than just a membership association." Not only because the time demands it, but because of the value proposition associations must offer to their members. Consumerism is taking over associations just like it's taking over healthcare. If you don't deliver the value your patients, customers, members want, you'll fail and someone else will do it better.

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You've described some of your superpowers. What superpowers don't you have that you wished you had?

Jordan: That's a long list. Patience is one thing. Patience can be a challenge when you're having to corral people who are not used to working together. I've had the benefit of learning from other industries and watching how they come together to fix a common problem. Then you come to healthcare. Some things in healthcare should be much easier to fix than they are. I work on having more patience every day.

Part of patience is learning how to not take things personally. You take a lot of daggers when you try to do something new. Stakeholders take a lot of daggers when you're trying to do something new. It comes with the territory on both sides. You have to have a short memory. The same people who were against you five weeks ago may be the same people who are your champions five days from now. I think we all can get better at that. I know I can get better at that.

BURDA'S FINAL BRIEF

In the movie *Magnum Force*, Harry "Dirty Harry" Callahan, played by Clint Eastwood, famously said, "A man's got to know his limitations." I don't know if anyone has ever shared that advice with Ann Jordan. And if they have, I'm sure she ignored it throughout her career and especially now as the president and CEO of a healthcare association. Healthcare associations, trade groups and membership societies are in a unique position to push for a better healthcare system for those who can least control it: consumers. Yet most have a singular focus: protect and improve the economic position of their members. However, those positions aren't mutually exclusive. Not only are they compatible, they depend on each other. I'd argue that serving consumers is the best way to serve your members. Without customers, there are no members. Jordan gets that. What Jordan is attempting to do at HFMA is truly revolutionary.

AUTHOR



David Burda began covering healthcare in 1983 and hasn't stopped since. Dave writes this monthly column "Burda on Healthcare," contributes weekly blog posts, manages our weekly newsletter 4sight Friday, and hosts our weekly Roundup podcast. Dave believes that healthcare is a business like any other business, and customers — patients — are king. If you do what's right for patients, good business results will follow.

Dave's personal experiences with the healthcare system both as a patient and family caregiver have shaped his point of view. It's also been shaped by covering the industry for 40 years as a reporter and editor. He worked at Modern Healthcare for 25 years, the last 11 as editor.

Prior to Modern Healthcare, he did stints at the American Medical Record Association (now AHIMA) and the American Hospital Association. After Modern Healthcare, he wrote a monthly column for Twin Cities Business explaining healthcare trends to a business audience, and he developed and executed content marketing plans for leading healthcare corporations as the editorial director for healthcare strategies at MSP Communications.

When he's not reading and writing about healthcare, Dave spends his time riding the trails of DuPage County, Illinois, on his bike, tending his vegetable garden and daydreaming about being a lobster fisherman in Maine. He lives in Wheaton, Illinois, with his lovely wife of 40 years and his three children, none of whom want to be journalists or lobster fishermen.

Visit 4sight.com/insights to read more from Dave Burda.



Ann Jordan

Ann Jordan is President and CEO of The Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA), which equips its more than 96,000 members to navigate a complex healthcare landscape. HFMA is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization that advances healthcare by collaborating with other key stakeholders to address industry challenges and providing guidance, education, practical tools and solutions, and thought leadership.

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