Notes from the Village

Building the trust network around your health data, one update at a time.

TrustMyOwn.Health 009: Waking up from a Dream about Co-Production

It's 4 am. I woke up from a dream where I was building a team to co-produce something (I can't remember what). I was in a maniacal rush to define the project, conjure the players, build systems and teams, and put myself out of business. It felt exhilarating and exhausting.



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Wait, I realized. The "something" is TMOH. I forced myself awake. The dream was day one, again and again. Every week (when awake), I plan how to hand someone a piece of this before I've fully defined it myself, whether to a co-founder, an advisor, or a reader, and ask them to help build the thing while we're all partly blind. Can we share power before the thing's shape is even settled? How do I let go of pieces I haven't finished holding? I need to wake up fully, grounded in what people who actually do this work have learned.

I've experimented with co-production throughout my career, even if I couldn't name it. My first experience with co-production occurred in 1997 (though we didn't use the term then). As Director of Quality Management at a Managed Care company, I formed advisory panels of members and providers. The Executive Director wanted members' and providers' counsel on the causes of low satisfaction scores. While digesting the feedback with his leadership team, the ED declared that we would be idiots to convene the panels and not listen.

Co-production is a two-sided readiness problem, not just an invitation to sit at the table. My concept of co-production rests on one thing, shared by everyone involved: capacity, willingness, and opportunity to participate. That applies to the people building it (researcher, developer, provider, boss) and the people it's built for (user, customer). In the 1970s, economist Elinor Ostrom developed the term co-production to describe the potential relationships that could exist between the 'regular producers' (street-level police officers, school teachers, or health workers) and 'clients' who want to be transformed by the service into safer, better educated, or healthier persons.

In future newsletters, I'll explore what I've heard about co-production from some of you Villagers. As a teaser: Janice Tufte at Hassanah Consulting has the tagline, "Working Together: Co-Create Healthier Communities." Ellen Schultz Consulting defines coproduction as when users define quality.

Where have you seen power actually change hands, not just be talked about? Please share your wisdom with us.

Onward, Danny Health Hats