Notes from the Village

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

TrustMyOwn.Health 019 — Values, not wallpaper

Paraphrasing a discussion from last week: “The Data Sovereignty Covenant makes sense. Company values often feel like wallpaper. You could paste them on a bank, a hospital, or a shoe store, and nobody would notice. These don’t. But are they enough?”

Values need to live. At Advocates, Inc., where I served as VP of Quality, our tagline was ‘First, We Listen.’ That value came up whenever the answer wasn’t cut-and-dried.

As I draft candidate values to consider with my partners, I set one test: a value has to help us say no to something. If it can't settle an argument, it's wallpaper.

Here's where I landed, in order.

1. **Stewards, not landlords.** We hold owners' data in trust. We don't charge rent for what's theirs.

   A landlord profits from what you can't take with you. A steward makes sure you always can. Plenty of platforms make money from your access to your own records. We won't.

2. **Respect boundaries.** We go only as far as owners authorize, partners agree, and teammates invite.

   Owners come first in that sentence on purpose. Your authorization is the outer edge of what we do with your data.

3. **Champion the curious.** Owners come to their data with a task. We help them ask: Is the data accurate? Is it helpful? What’s missing?

   Curiosity isn't the ticket you need to get in. It comes from use: tracking whether a new medication is helping or coordinating care for a parent among three doctors. Once your data is working for you, the questions show up on their own.

4. **Health is the point. Data is the tool.** Every feature has to earn its place by helping someone get healthier.

   Many health systems use patients’ data for sale. We turn that around: everything we build, everything we collect, and every path your data takes to a care partner, clinician, or researcher must help you get healthier.

5. **Partner before we build.** If a service, app, or company already does it well for data owners, we connect with them rather than compete with them.

   Partner first doesn’t mean we don’t build. We look around first. And a partner has to do it well for owners, in line with our covenant.

If the first two sound familiar, they should. They're the everyday version of the Data Sovereignty Covenant. These values are how we hold ourselves accountable on an ordinary Wednesday, not only on paper.

What do you think? What’s unclear, and what’s missing?

Onward, Danny Health Hats