

Don't Wish for It, Work for It

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by Margaret A. Skurka, MS, RHIA, CCS

Your accomplishments in your career and in your personal life have been possible because you've worked for them—not just wished for them. The same can be said about AHIMA as we've accomplished agenda and vision items over the past years.

We have numerous goals for 2000. We're making progress on our expeditions and new organizational design. Team Talks scheduled this month will provide you the latest news on both fronts. We'll also update you on the multi-year image marketing campaign and give you the opportunity to provide us with much-needed input from the membership. I challenge you to continue to help the Association move forward on all of the above as well as continue to advance the profession through Vision 2006. As always, we have a very full plate and we can't just wish for events to happen; we have to work hard to move our plans forward.

Marketing Our Skills

Our image marketing campaign is the result of much planning—including a thorough analysis of existing AHIMA employer group-related research, and an extensive review of AHIMA member literature as well as previous marketing efforts and messages. The AHIMA Board of Directors and staff, as well as healthcare industry experts outside the Association, provided input.

We had to start somewhere—and as a whole, Association leadership agreed to start with employers: CIOs, CFOs, CEOs, COOs, VPs, human resources personnel, and others. Our focus point in year one is on the following settings: hospitals and integrated delivery systems, physician group practices, ambulatory care clinics and surgery centers, and managed care organizations. This is where the first dollars will be spent. As we move forward, additional employer settings will be addressed. We are also including AHIMA members as a target audience. That means you and me. We must do our part to initiate change and get the message out about the HIM profession in our workplace and beyond. We cannot sit around and say we wish things were different—we must work to make them different.

Members Make the Association

Sometimes I feel a little troubled at meetings when I hear our members talk about AHIMA as if it is only some organization in Chicago that does things. The Association is the nearly 40,000 members, and we must take the responsibility to participate in the image marketing campaign if it is going to be a successful endeavor. As members, we are best positioned to continually promote the unique skills and capabilities of HIM professionals. We must ensure that AHIMA members are recognized in the marketplace as those best qualified to manage healthcare data. We know there is increased competition from others in the healthcare delivery system and we know the Association has competition from other health information organizations. Collectively we can help one another update our skills for this changing healthcare marketplace. Collectively we can make this strong Association even stronger, this important profession even more highly valued.

So, exactly what should you, the member, do?

1. Make certain your employer knows that you understand both information management and the healthcare environment and are ready to play a key role in helping the organization reach its goals.
2. Blow your own horn about your specific talents and knowledge. If you don't do this, who else will?
3. Go to the AHIMA Web site daily to check for information, resources, and practice essentials. In February's column, I challenged all members to get connected and on the Internet. It is a reachable goal and I'm going to be relentless about it all year long.
4. Read your "E-alerts," AHIMA's breaking HIM-related news, and use the information you learn.
5. Give presentations, hand out brochures, write articles, and call colleagues.

Together we can market this profession to the maximum. The Association is putting budget dollars toward this effort—our members must participate in the rest.

New Roles, Meeting Goals

Vision 2006 showed us that we have new roles to fill in the profession. AHIMA recognizes the challenges the HIM professional faces in meeting new needs within organizations. By working together, we can reach all our goals. It is not easy to carve out time to do it all—as a full-time working mother of three, I absolutely know how hard it is to find time to do more. But lend a hand in this regard. The image marketing will succeed and thrive if we all participate in it. Our money and our time will be well spent.

If you have new ideas that we haven't thought of, or a success story to share, we're all ears. I look forward to continuing to hear from you and I'm counting on your feedback. We all wish for a better profession for the future—by working for it, we'll achieve that. I'm grateful for your help now and in the future.

Here are two ideas to keep in mind in the coming months. Tennis legend Arthur Ashe said, "Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can." They are wonderful words and I believe they fit us well at this juncture in the profession. And finally, from *The Joy of Working* by Dennis Waitley: "Each human being has exactly the same number of hours and minutes every day. Rich people can't buy more hours. Scientists can't invent new minutes. You can't save time to spend it on another day. Success depends upon using it wisely by planning and setting priorities." Make this profession and its future a priority and our future will look great.

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