

# Establishing Professional Development Goals: the Means to Your Future

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HIM professionals can invent their future through professional development goals. Last month this column outlined resources that HIM professionals can use to develop skills for the changing healthcare environment.<sup>1</sup> This month's column details three fundamental steps HIM professionals can take to create a professional development plan:

1. Assess the current healthcare environment, outline trends for the foreseeable future, and envision future professional roles
2. Assess the current skills and knowledge base for the profession
3. Compare your current skills and knowledge base to those that are likely to be needed in the future and create a unique lifelong plan for learning the needed skills and gaining the required knowledge

## Step 1: Assessing the Healthcare Environment

HIM professionals should review reports from AHIMA's work force study along with those from e-HIM<sup>®</sup> task forces and work groups in order to assess the current healthcare environment (see "References").

For example, "Embracing the Future" and "A Vision of the e-HIM Future" outline the future directions of the HIM profession and work force. In addition, the HIM Practice Transformation e-HIM Work Group's practice briefs offer sample job descriptions of new HIM roles. These resources provide the necessary information members need to move on to step 2.

## Step 2: Assessing Current Skills

HIM professionals can assess the current skills and knowledge base of the profession in several ways. One approach AHIMA uses is job analysis (also known as practice analysis, role delineation, or role and function study). This analysis is performed as a part of the development of certification examinations. It identifies important activities, knowledge, skills, and abilities used to define the content domain and create competency statements.

HIM educational programs also offer practicing professionals insight into what may be needed to modernize skills and competencies for the changing e-HIM environment. To address the education of tomorrow's professionals, the HIM Educational Strategy Committee created the "Framework for HIM Education." The framework details the knowledge base graduates will need at the predegree certificate, HIM associate degree, HIM baccalaureate degree, and HIM master's degree levels. It also describes the roles for HIM in an electronic workplace at each academic level (see "[References](#)").

## Step 3: Assessing Yourself

For the third step, HIM professionals should perform a self-assessment of their skill sets, outline where they want to go with their careers, and enroll in classes to continue lifelong learning. Assessing skills, abilities, values, desires, and life plans at a particular place and time is the basis of professional development planning. Without the self-assessment of your current skills and knowledge base, determining the needed skills and required knowledge for career advancement can be a daunting task.

Lifelong learning is the ability to use the experiences accumulated over a lifetime to build the knowledge and skills needed to achieve current and future goals. It is fundamental to professional development.

Tools are available to assist with self-assessment and the creation of a progress plan for learning. Those specific to HIM enable HIM professionals to assess proficiencies in emerging e-HIM roles through personalized gap analysis. Other tools are

used to profile career interests and learning styles such as the Riley Guide (see "[References](#)").

Considering the robust, myriad, and ever-changing opportunities available to HIM professionals, whatever future you envision requires continual growth and planning. Professional development planning is about identifying what, why, how, and where knowledge needs to be gained and skills learned that will assist with meeting career ambitions, enriching work experience, or further developing strengths.

Outcomes of this planning are specific goals with the categories of skills or competencies to be achieved, activities necessary to reach the goals, and target dates. With goals in hand, the means to your future is more focused, feasible, and not as far-off as you might think.

## Note

1. Fenton, Susan H. "Skills for an e-HIM Future." *Journal of AHIMA* 77, no. 8 (2006): 70. Also available online in the FORE Library: HIM Body of Knowledge at [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org).

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