

# Following Interests Yields Dynamic Career

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*by Jessica Squazzo, assistant editor*

If you don't like it, you can always go back," says Michelle Morgan, RHIA, about trying new roles in HIM. She would know—she's jumped from a traditional HIM setting into the IS realm to the vendor world and back again.

Morgan is currently the director of clinical informatics for Health Choice in Memphis, a managed care contracting company jointly owned by Methodist Healthcare and MetroCare Physicians (a non-profit independent practice association), which consists of five hospitals in the Memphis area. She is responsible for managing the rollout of the hospital's electronic health record (EHR) to physicians and physician office staff.

"I get these groups 'turned on' from start to finish so that they can access the hospitals' system from their offices over the Web with a secure connection," she says. "I represent the clinicians' needs for access to hospital information and try to bridge the gaps between physician groups and the hospital." According to Morgan, she is also involved in helping physician offices understand new technologies, such as wireless handhelds.

## Ten Good Reasons

After graduating from Northeastern University in Boston, Morgan worked as a director of HIM for the UT Medical Group. Eventually, she decided she needed a change.

She asked her employer to create an IS position for her. "I gave him [the vice president of IS] a list of 10 reasons why he should hire me," she says, "and it happened after a few months." She first worked in IS as a business systems analyst, then as a project leader, testing applications for upgrades, training end-users, writing end-user documentation, and handling application security. After working in IS for about four years, Morgan decided she was ready for yet another change. This time, she made a leap into the vendor world.

## A Breath of Fresh Air

Morgan began working as a project manager for IDX. "It was very challenging and rewarding because I dealt with physician groups all over the country," she says. Now she finds herself using her experiences in the vendor world in her current job. "It has been invaluable for project planning, understanding the development cycle, and working with salespeople," she says.

Another perk of the vendor world versus the traditional HIM setting was autonomy, Morgan found. "I really liked only being responsible for myself," she says. She also liked contributing to the company's national release team. She admits it was a breath of fresh air to not have to deal with personnel issues such as staff absences.

Morgan's next step was into her current role at Health Choice. She says it's a decision she couldn't be happier with. For instance, the pace of her new job keeps her on her toes. If physicians can't come to her facility for training, she's out the door and at their sites, ready to help. She says she finds "streamlining" the physicians' and other hospital staff's work very exciting. "They're really appreciative," she says.

Morgan sees plenty of opportunities for HIM professionals in the future, particularly jobs in the healthcare information security and medical informatics sectors. The reason? The diverse scope of knowledge most HIM professionals possess. "HIM folks have always managed multiple priorities and have been cognizant of confidentiality practices," she says.

For Morgan, leaping into new, more nontraditional roles in HIM is about learning and new experiences. "If you have an interest in something, you've just got to give it a shot," she says.

“I think my work speaks for itself at the end of the day. If I can help one person each day by sharing my knowledge and getting them access to a system or a process, then that's enough for me to go home and have a great evening or weekend.”

—Michelle Morgan, RHIA, Director, Clinical Informatics for Health Choice, Memphis, TN

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