

From Freshman to Leader Through Lifelong Learning

Save to myBoK

by Barbara Odom-Wesley, PhD, RHIA

Remember being a “freshman?” Though the word may have a somewhat negative connotation, when put in the context of continuing education it becomes much more positive. As education spans the life cycle in the form of lifelong learning, we become freshmen again and again. As an HIM professional, it is not unusual to feel like a freshman in the wake of changing job roles, new legislation, and new skills to learn. Each freshman experience brings eagerness, excitement, and some anxiety.

I still remember the excitement of entering high school as a freshman. It was a time of new things—a new campus, new instructors, and new friends. Within this enthusiasm to move forward was a fear of the unknown. In college, I became a freshman again with that familiar eagerness to see what was next. The fear of change may return as bigger challenges present themselves, but being a freshman always means progress.

New Beginnings, Fresh Opportunities

Even after we complete our formal education, a new job revives the freshman experience again. We continue being a freshman or a beginner in our professional and personal lives. Being a freshman means taking a risk, but the rewards are more than satisfying.

Lifelong learning means we never finish. The healthcare industry keeps adding new things for us to learn, such as HIPAA. The results of this continuous learning include such rewards as increased salary, a promotion or new title, increased responsibility, new challenges, or a new credential or degree. Freshman opportunities also give us new adventures, new friends, and new goals. AHIMA offers a multitude of opportunities for us to relive that freshman excitement.

The Tools for Learning

Learning opportunities at AHIMA are available in many forms, including audio seminars, videoconferences, reading, Web-based programs, and specialty face-to-face workshops.

This year AHIMA offers audio seminars on numerous HIM topics: specialty coding intricacies, implementation processes for APCs, and management solutions. Past seminars are available on audiocassette or in Internet-archived format.

AHIMA produces publications on a number of HIM topics including a management series, coding collection, and textbooks on a variety of subjects. New for 2002 are two new coding resources, *Coding in Context* and *Effective Management of Coding Services*. There is also a new textbook for HIT programs, *Health Information Management Technology: An Applied Approach*. The *Journal* remains a valuable learning resource with quizzes to earn continuing education credits. Other resources include subscriptions to specialty publications such as *In Confidence*.

AHIMA has also expanded its Web-based training options. Coding Assessment and Training Solutions allows employers to evaluate coding skills and knowledge while keeping abreast of the latest coding practices and policies. Coding Basics offers 12 unique courses to teach the basics of coding through Web-based learning. You can become a privacy expert with AHIMA's Web-based interactive privacy training courses. Through a partnership with the College of St. Scholastica, Web-based learning is available for management courses and clinical vocabularies for the computerized patient record. To access any of these resources, go to www.ahima.org and click on “Professional Development.”

When new situations or opportunities come along, we probably feel like beginners again, and that can be a little uncomfortable. However, I challenge each of you to continue to learn, grow, and progress both professionally and personally. Remember, freshmen soon become seniors.

Barbara Odom-Wesley (medprobw@flash.net) is president of Medpro Services, an Arlington, TX, consulting firm, and a part-time faculty member at Texas Woman's University.

Article citation:

Odom-Wesley, Barbara. "From Freshman to Leader Through Lifelong Learning." *Journal of AHIMA* 73, no.5 (2002): 8.

Driving the Power of Knowledge

Copyright 2022 by The American Health Information Management Association. All Rights Reserved.