

Getting What You Give: Volunteers Give Value to Their Associations, Get Value for Their Organizations

Save to myBoK

by Wendy Mangin, MS, RHIA

When you work at a community hospital with 240 beds, you quickly learn who the go-to people are who can help your department reach its goals. For me, this person is Chuck Christian, director of information systems at Good Samaritan Hospital.

Over the years, Chuck and I have worked on many projects together, such as a clinical documentation system, speech recognition for radiologists, and a new imaging system.

Collaboration Is the Key

Along the way, Chuck and I have become good friends. He knew of my involvement with my state HIM association and with AHIMA and was happy to write a recommendation letter for me to run for the board of directors.

I was also aware of Chuck's volunteerism. He had been elected to the College of Health Information Management Executives board of directors, serving on its membership committee for five years and eventually chairing the committee. Chuck was also active in the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), serving as a member of the Indiana chapter in the '90s before it dismantled. In 2000 Chuck was one of four individuals to restart the Indiana chapter. He currently serves on its board of directors and serves as its webmaster.

I was thrilled to write him a recommendation letter when he ran for the HIMSS board of directors. His bid was successful, and he was elected to serve a three-year term in 2007. During his first year of board service, he was elected to the chair-elect position and will assume chair of the HIMSS board on July 1, 2008. So, for six months, the president of AHIMA and the chair of HIMSS will be from the same community hospital. It truly is a small world.

The Benefits of Volunteering

Chuck says that what he enjoys most about serving his national professional association is gaining a better understanding of the healthcare industry as a whole as well as its regional similarities and differences. Holding a leadership position with HIMSS has also exposed Chuck to international healthcare delivery and how technology is being applied to improve the quality of care around the world.

When you consider volunteering at the local, regional, state, or national level with AHIMA, consider the value this can bring to your job and employer. Both Chuck and I agree that you not only build many friendships, but you also build working relationships with professionals in many different work settings that might not have been possible otherwise.

AHIMA's Communities of Practice offer a great amount of idea and resource sharing, but face-to-face interaction with other volunteers on committees and boards certainly assists with solving problems we all face in our daily jobs. You are also exposed to issues on a state and national level that ultimately could affect your employer. Being in the know and having an opportunity to make a positive impact can bring real value to your organization.

Chuck and I are very grateful to the Good Samaritan Hospital leadership for their support. We also owe great thanks to the staffs of our respective departments, who keep everything running smoothly when we have to be away.

I like the saying "Be as useful as you can." Introduce your facility leaders to AHIMA and the many benefits derived from volunteer service, then step up. Remember: the more we can enjoy ourselves and others, the more we can accomplish.

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