

In New Role, Years of Experience

Save to myBoK

by Kevin Heubusch, managing editor

Scan Michelle Wieczorek's credentials—RN, RHIT, CPHQ, CPUR—and consider how she came to work at the center of the external and internal Web sites of a major health system.

The biggest reason doesn't have to do with knowing how information becomes pixels on a screen. It has to do with knowing how people use information—knowing how information flows through a healthcare system and knowing that it must be organized differently for different staff.

For Wieczorek, this comprehensive knowledge came from a career that began in nursing, moved to HIM, and is now based in IT.

Wanted: Broad Skill Set

Wieczorek is director of e-commerce business development at Saint Vincent Health System in Erie, PA. She reports directly to the CIO, as well as to the senior vice president for marketing and communications.

She serves as webmaster of Saint Vincent's consumer Web site and publisher of its extensive intranet. She manages content, develops interfaces, delivers information, and maintains consistent marketing messages to vastly different audiences, ranging from consumers to clinicians to administrators.

"It's been helpful to have someone who knows the organization and who knows how clinical and nonclinical people need to access information," she says. "I use HIM—everything in my arsenal—every day."

When the position was created, Wieczorek says, "the CIO didn't look for a high-tech person. He looked for a skill set that was very broad—someone who knew how the hospital works and how information flows through the organization." Then he matched those skills with someone who was interested in learning the job's technical component.

From Nurse to HIM Director

Wieczorek started as a nurse, moving up to run a floor. After her son was born, she sought a job where she could "go home at night." She became a nursing information system analyst, a role created to help nursing move toward online documentation, standards of care, and computerized medical records.

Then the HIM director position came open. There was no one in the organization with an HIM credential, and Wieczorek was asked to apply. She got the job and immediately began an HIM distance education program. She held the position for 10 years and "loved it." Those years saw great change and opportunity, and the department accomplished much.

She then followed her interest in technology into the IT department and the position she currently holds.

Contributing Firsthand Knowledge

As a nurse, Wieczorek's introduction to the HIM field came when a "very smart HIM person" pulled her into a clinical project. It was her first contact with computerized medical records and clinical informatics. She was pulled into other projects with IT and learned a lot through osmosis. "Initially I was not a perfect person on anyone's list to be at the table," she says, "but I started learning more and became a better fit." It helped the organization immensely to have her firsthand knowledge—someone who knows that information is used differently by different people and that it must be organized according to a person's role.

“The first time a smart CIO puts an HIM professional at the table for a clinical information system project, they discover very quickly that HIM is more than an endpoint for clinical information,” Wieczorek notes. “It is very much a part of the continuum and very much a part of the life cycle of clinical information.”

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