

Investing in Your Future

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by Bryon Pickard, MBA, RHIA

Generally accepted principles for effective investment typically include asset allocation and portfolio diversification. Investment prospectuses routinely carry warnings that past performance is no guarantee of future results. In other words, better to look ahead and not give too much credence to the past. For HIM professionals, acquiring new e-HIM® skills is a good investment in the future.

Investing in e-HIM

Just like stock values, an investment in a chosen profession can fluctuate in response to market, political, and economic conditions. An excellent approach to evaluate the risk of investing in an HIM career is to monitor what's happening in the industry. The US Department of Labor recognizes HIM and health IT as one of the 10 fastest-growing career fields for the future, with a strong 47 percent growth expected through 2012. With the globalization of healthcare, this trend is not limited to the US.

This spring I had the opportunity to take part in the International Federation of Health Records Organizations Congress in Seoul, South Korea. Representatives from 38 countries came together for the week-long event, joining in educational sessions and tours, sharing best practices, and networking.

While on that same side of the world, I added in a trip to Taipei, Taiwan, to speak at the 10th annual conference of the Taiwan Medical Record Management Association, where I learned a great deal about Taiwan's HIM practices. Throughout my trip, it was evident that implementing HIM principles and new information technologies to improve healthcare quality and safety and gain control over escalating costs are truly global themes. What struck me most during my travels was how fortunate we are in the US to have established HIM and health IT education programs and recognized professional credentialing.

The world today is changing faster than ever, and we must all consider how best to adapt and realize our full potential. I recently read Thomas Friedman's book *The World Is Flat*, which describes how globalization and technology innovations are changing the course of the 21st century. With most countries experiencing aging populations, misaligned incentives, and unsustainable healthcare costs, we should expect to see more collaborative global innovations and solutions. Already we are seeing national boundaries for healthcare become less relevant and greater movement toward global standards harmonization in health IT applications and medical education.

Valuable Lessons

Speaking of technology, let me offer a reminder. If you have ever experienced the horrifying reality of a hard drive crash on your home or office computer, you already know what I am about to say. For the rest of you, it is only a matter of time before you experience the infamous blue screen, system freeze, clicking hard drive, or some other system error signaling that your hard drive has just crashed.

Recently having lived through such a traumatic event, I can now attest to the importance of backing up the hard drive and properly storing all those system installation and program disks that come with your computer. Even better, invest in an inexpensive USB memory stick. Think ahead, it's worth the investment.

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