

Make an Impact on Future HIM Generations

Save to myBoK

By Diann H. Smith, MS, RHIA, CHP, FAHIMA

How do you make an impact? There are numerous ways, but the beginnings are often small—like the pebble thrown into the ocean that begins a ripple that grows larger and larger. Even though the breadth and depth of an individual's influence might not be immediately evident, a simple desire to help someone else can grow into something bigger than imagined as others continue to benefit and flourish as a result of their actions.

Anyone can make an impact—the main factor in doing so is to simply start. Making a positive impact in the HIM profession provides the platform for long-term influence on healthcare delivery.

Traditionally, the month of May is a great time for fresh starts and new beginnings as many celebrate the end of the school semester, graduations, and starting their first job in the HIM profession. Students and those new to the profession depend on existing HIM professionals to guide them by providing opportunities to learn, grow, and even secure their first job.

It is disheartening to read social media posts from new graduates stating that they can't secure a job because they don't have "work experience." How can we make a positive impact on this trajectory? Our CAHIIM-accredited educational HIT and HIM programs have provided a good educational foundation that requires professional practice experience (PPE)—which translates into work experience. We can be innovative with this opportunity to influence the needed change, and open discussion on how employers define "work experience."

A large healthcare organization and educational institution in Texas collaborated to change the traditional model from one PPE student at a time to a cohort of six to eight students, who complete their PPE with an instructor providing oversight when students are at the clinical site. Students are assigned team projects during their PPE. They learn that collaboration, group contributions, and the success of the team are important outcomes in the workplace. It's the success of the team that matters. The students have access to employer resources and other HIM professionals as mentors. Having access to this expertise provides applied experience where students can practice and operationalize academic concepts. Being a PPE site is one of the strongest pipelines for recruitment and keeping vacancies filled. Students come with a strong foundation of academic knowledge and are provided the unique opportunity to apply that knowledge and use real-life skills.

When these graduates are hired the onboarding timeline is shortened and orientation is faster, allowing successful assimilation into the workforce. The impact of this model decreases recruitment costs because the HIT program is a key strategic benefit for recruiting hard to find talent. This Texas employer updated their job descriptions to recognize the PPE as work experience and the hiring of educated professionals as a top priority.

Innovative ideas such as this can easily turn into a tsunami that has a widespread impact on the industry. Multiple problems are addressed simultaneously—workforce development and effective recruiting from an educated talent pool for employers, and a defined path to securing that first job for new graduates.

Many HIM professionals are committed to supporting students and new graduates. What are your innovative ideas, and how are you making an impact?

Diann H. Smith (diannh.smith@ahima.org) is vice president of health information management services and clinical documentation improvement at Texas Health Resources.

Driving the Power of Knowledge

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