

Making a Difference with Health Information

Save to myBoK

by Mahlon Harlacher, RHIA

Health information management grows increasingly complex and reliant on information technology every year. HIM professionals have become critical players in the healthcare arena, and it's time to showcase these contributions. In celebration of National Health Information and Technology Week, raise the profile of the HIM department in your facility while recognizing your staff's hard work and having fun at the same time!

Interdepartmental Brainstorming

At The Brethren Home Community in New Oxford, PA, we created an HI&T Week task force and held several brainstorming sessions with the information systems, HIM, and communications departments to design activities that would be both informative and interactive for our fellow staff members. Our task force consisted of Ralph Olson, CIO, Todd Couzins and Corey Miller from IS, Cindy Schiebl and Marian Fletcher from communications, Rebecca Toms, RN, BSN, ADON, from nursing, and Lynda Groft and me from HIM.

As the director of HIM, I made a guest appearance on "In-Touch," a half-hour television program broadcast throughout the healthcare center and the campus community. On any given day, "In-Touch" can be viewed by more than 900 people. I used this platform to promote HI&T Week to all campus residents. I addressed the importance of accurate, timely health information and the numerous tasks and duties performed by the HIM department, such as release of information, record retention, chart completion, and regulations governing the maintenance of medical records. I also emphasized the collaborative effort needed between the HIM and IS departments to ensure efficient capture and dissemination of information. Our IS department staff also appeared on the program to explain computer hardware and how our system functions within our local area network.

Pop Some Quizzes

The AHIMA Web site provided our HI&T Week task force with a good foundation for planning activities. We decided to use quizzes to get the entire facility and campus involved and found a way to provide answers in a quick and interesting way to employees, residents, and visitors by creating seven different posters and displaying three copies of each in prominent employee work locations. The poster locations were noted on a map on the back of each quiz. This enabled staff to quickly find posters and participate in the week's activities. The posters included topics such as HIM statistics, medical record processes, model of a communication network, and a network access model.

Enticed by the offer of HI&T Week merchandise, staff reviewed the posters and completed the quizzes. Our IS department also provided a friendly reminder to all PC users when logging on and off their computer that read, "HI&T Week: Have you completed the quizzes yet?"

We used an old, unused server to collect the completed quizzes. IS removed the internal boards and hard drives, and the external floppy disk was removed so completed quizzes could be slid right into the server case. We displayed the server's old boards and drives on top of the case to attract attention and encourage people to submit their completed quizzes.

All-around Success

Our staff received many compliments on how informative and well designed the posters were. Further, the quizzes created an interactive arena that really captured everyone's attention. And thanks to the team effort displayed between our HIM, IS, and communications departments, our 1999 HI&T Week was an overall success for our facility.

National HI&T Week: November 5-11, 2000

Here are a few ways you can ensure your HI&T week is a success:

plan

- Get your ideas down on paper early to ensure a week that's full of activities and one that will be remembered. Brainstorm with colleagues for ideas that have the most impact
- It pays to advertise! Make sure people know about your HI&T Week celebrations well in advance of the festivities

publicize

- Display several "Making a Difference with Health Information" posters in high-traffic areas
- Announce HI&T week on computer log-on screens and on your Web site
- Get the word out in your association's newsletter
- Keep department heads informed. Send them a creative letter explaining your goals, the services you provide, and let them know how your staff or department is making a difference

open (your) house

- Show what your department and staff does with an open house and tour. Create eye-catching maps that note points of interest throughout your facility
- Host a reception and invite everyone in your facility
- Demonstrate your enthusiasm by wearing HI&T Week T-shirts
- Door prizes help build excitement and recognition. Insulated lunch bags, coffee mugs, and pens-on-a-rope make great premiums
- Give demonstrations to highlight the improvements and changes that enhance productivity and efficiency in your department

get your department involved

- Have a kickoff breakfast
- Hold an awards luncheon to recognize outstanding department employees
- Organize a special outing for the entire department to honor their hard work and dedication to making a difference in healthcare. Some ideas: sporting events, cruises, miniature golf, or picnics
- Prepare certificates of appreciation and distribute during the week

Mahlon Harlacher is director of health information management and performance improvement at The Brethren Home Community in New Oxford, PA. His department was one of the winners of AHIMA's 1999 National Health Information and Technology Week Contest. To enter this year's contest for National Health Information and Technology Week, visit our Web site at www.ahima.org, beginning the week of October 30, 2000.

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