Meeting Evolving Workforce Requirements

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By Cassi Birnbaum, MS, RHIA, CPHQ, FAHIMA

New technology, an evolving regulatory environment, financial pressures, and consolidation in the marketplace have all emerged as factors that are shaping the health information management (HIM) career path. Now is the time to examine the maturity state of the electronic health record (EHR) and technology improvements that will impact conventional coding roles within the next five to 10 years. This hits very close to home for me, as my son is presently pursuing an education in coding and documentation at a CAHIIM-approved program.

As the AHIMA House of Delegates and Board of Directors examines the future of coding, now is the time for re-inventing and broadening your skills and education to meet the evolving roles in information governance, data integrity, informatics, and analytics. AHIMA continues to update the HIM Career Map, CCHIIM is exploring new certification tracks, and CAHIIM is working with the Council for Excellence in Education (CEE) to define new HIM competencies and workforce requirements.

A workforce study was conducted during the second quarter of 2014 to define the nature of the HIM workforce and forecast the future needs and requirements of the industry 10 to 20 years from now. The preliminary report demonstrates that our members' view of their value to employers highly correlates to healthcare executives. The ranking of coding and clinical documentation core competencies evolve in the future state to data integrity positions associated with EHRs, data analytics, and critical thinking skills.

I have identified new roles in the executive suite and supporting positions at the staff and leadership level, including:

- Vice President of Population Health
- Vice President of EHR and Innovation
- Vice President of Patient Experience
- Vice President of Information Governance
- Vice President of Health Informatics
- Chief Data Officer

Recent research points to the demand for data scientists growing in the future, and the Big Data market will likely grow anywhere from 20 to 40 percent annually through 2017.[1]

I want to encourage AHIMA members to push themselves out of their respective comfort zones to apply for these positions or to identify the skills and knowledge gaps that could preclude them from consideration. As the walls come tumbling down in HIM departments, replaced by virtual workplaces and services provided in non-traditional settings, the need for traditional staff and leadership positions have changed as dramatically as our transformation from paper to electronic records.

I pledge to you that AHIMA is here to offer up heavy doses of mentoring and coaching to ensure you realize your respective career goals, and fill the newly created and expanding roles needed to meet the increasing demand for knowledge workers in HIM. Together as an engaged HIM community I know that we can realize our vision and motivate our members to achieve their full potential while advancing the practice of HIM.

Note

1. "10 Big Data Career Killers." *Information Management.* www.information-management.com/gallery/10-Big-Data-Scientist-Career-Killers-10026239-1.html.

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