

# Nonstop Change Leads to New Opportunities

Save to myBoK

By Patty Thierry Sheridan, MBA, RHIA, FAHIMA

We live in a time of nonstop change. The pace is fast and constant. To thrive, HIM professionals need to do more than simply adjust—we need to completely shift into a new mindset, developing new work methods along the way.

This starts with accepting the realities of today's marketplace. Job loss is real and jobs are going away as a result of cost cutting, restructuring, and new technology. But jobs are also being transformed to meet organizational needs. We work in an era where we must begin to define ourselves not by outdated job titles or responsibilities, but by emerging and evolving HIM needs.

## Entering a New Era

While there is no doubt that work in HIM will always be plentiful both now and in the future, it will not always fit neatly into traditional job titles and departments. William Bridges, author of *Managing Transitions, Making the Most of Change*, suggests that in times of "dejobbing" the best career strategy is to "stop doing a job and start finding the work that needs doing." In order to identify all work that needs to be accomplished in today's fast-paced healthcare industry, HIM professionals must fully engage in the change process, anticipating and preparing for the impact of new technology, regulations, and trends. To develop a role that allows us to fulfill these tasks, HIM professionals need a solid foundation that will include higher education, HIM core knowledge, and technology skills.

## The People Side of Change

Building that foundation is just the beginning. Transition management skills are essential to creating effective career paths that will also help our organizations manage difficult transitions, such as the adoption of EHRs, exchange of health information, and implementation of ICD-10.

As Bridges notes, the transition process—the personal journey we all go through when coping with change—is often more difficult than the changes themselves. Full acceptance, including changes in behavior, often take longer than a project's material due date. Though perhaps beautiful on paper, change management plans that don't consider the additional human factors of the transition process will run into unexpected roadblocks.

Bridges categorizes transitions in three stages: endings, the neutral zone, and new beginnings. Each stage requires an understanding of the psychological impact of change. Our ability to move through these stages will result in better outcomes and a smoother path to effective change.

When all is said and done, the role of HIM professionals is to:

- Be recognized as a trusted source in health information management
- Champion consumer access and use of health information
- Ensure the trustworthiness of data in our organizations

In the words of American futurist Alvin Toffler, "Our moral responsibility is not to stop the future but to shape it... to channel our destiny in humane directions and ease the trauma of transition." Dream big!

## Reference

Bridges, William. *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 2003.

Patty Thierry Sheridan ([ptsheridan@care-communications.com](mailto:ptsheridan@care-communications.com)) is president of Care Communications.

---

**Article citation:**

Sheridan, Patty Thierry. "Nonstop Change Leads to New Opportunities" *Journal of AHIMA* 83, no.8 (August 2012): 10.

---

Driving the Power of Knowledge

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