

Using Electronic Resources to Recruit and Hire Employees

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by Angela Picard, MEd, RHIA (formerly RRA)

Hiring the right employees for HIM jobs presents a unique challenge for employers. However, electronic resources offer more options for an employer's searching and recruiting efforts. With these tools, employers can go beyond the traditional methods of print advertising and/or retaining the services of a recruiter.

Successful recruiting begins with building a collaborative relationship with your human resources staff. Many HR departments are using electronic database products, such as Resumix (www.resumix.com), to store and retrieve resumes of qualified job applicants. In addition, your HR staff can advise and assist in revising and updating job descriptions to better reflect the knowledge and skills crucial to key HIM positions.

Electronic Job Postings

Posting job openings in electronic forums is a great way to maximize your recruiting efforts and save money at the same time. And there are a number of options for advertising electronically, including:

- *advertise the position on your company/organization Web site:* Work with your HR and information systems department to post job openings on the company Web site. Include the Web site address in other advertising when posting job notices in additional forums and publications.
- *post notices on AHIMA's Web site job bank:* This is a free service for AHIMA members. With your AHIMA member identification number, you can access the job bank available on the bulletin board page at www.ahima.org/bbs/index.html. The AHIMA job bank includes current classifieds from the *Journal of AHIMA*, a listing of positions available (posted by employers seeking job candidates), and a professionals available listing (posted by job candidates seeking specific opportunities). In the coming months, AHIMA's "Communities of Practice" will become the new home for the Job Bank service.
- *post notices on job boards for state HIM association Web sites:* Many state HIM associations have Web sites that include an area for posting job openings. This service is free on some sites, such as the Florida Health Information Management Association site at www.ohima.org/jobs/advertising.html. To find out if a particular state has a Web site, visit the AHIMA online directory of component state associations at www.ahima.org/directory/index.html.
- *e-mail job vacancies to discussion groups and listservs utilized by HIM professionals, such as HIM-L:* To subscribe to HIM-L, send an e-mail to LISTSERV@LISTS.UMSMED.EDU, leaving the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type "SUBSCRIBE HIM-L Your Name" (e.g., SUBSCRIBE HIM-L Jane Doe). For assistance with subscribing to HIM-L, send an e-mail message to him-help@lists.umsmed.edu. After subscribing, you can post job announcements to this worldwide audience of health information professionals. There also are other listservs out there that are specific to different areas of HIM practice, such as coding, quality improvement, and HIM educators that can provide invaluable contacts and networking opportunities. Select the listserv(s) that most closely matches the type of job you are advertising.
- *e-mail HIM colleagues to ask for assistance in identifying and referring potential job candidates:* Electronic networking is a great tool for broadening your recruiting initiative beyond your limited geographic location. If you are willing to hire new graduates, consider contacting health information educators and ask them to announce/post job notices to their students. work with a recruiter who uses electronic tools to aid in the recruiting process: When working with a recruiter, inquire about their use of electronic resources to advertise the position. Do they have a Web site? Can they post jobs to other Web sites, electronic job boards, and listservs for you?

Information to provide when posting electronic job openings may include:

- name and Web site address of the company/organization
- brief description of the facility (type, bed size, location) or company (products/services, industry focus)
- job title
- job description
- salary range (optional)
- relocation assistance or sign-on bonuses
- preferred resume format(s) (e.g., paper, ASCII text, e-mail attachment)
- name, phone/fax numbers, and e-mail address of contact person
- application deadline

Think about how you will handle candidate inquiries and responses. Will all communication be directed to the HR department, the HIM director/supervisor, or another designated representative?

Screening Applicants

Due to the unlimited and inexpensive circulation of electronic job postings, you can reach a broad audience. Depending on your instructions for submitting resumes, you will have an opportunity to evaluate various qualities of the applicant, such as:

- ability to follow instructions for resume format and submission procedures
- level of computer skills (especially if the applicant is providing electronic and/or Web-based resumes)
- clarity and professional presentation style of the resume
- credentials and professional affiliations
- employment history
- educational background

Select candidates to interview based upon the results of the initial screening process. If the applicant lives in a distant geographic location, a phone interview is often a good way to make a determination about his or her suitability for a subsequent face-to-face interview. The phone interview also provides an opportunity to request references and to review specific items noted in the resume.

If you outsource the hiring process to healthcare recruiters, be sure to use them as a resource during the applicant screening process. A reputable recruiter can assist in conducting applicant background checks and verification of credentials and make recommendations regarding compatibility of a particular candidate for a specific employment setting.

Interview Tips

Once interview candidates are selected, it is important to prepare for the actual interview process.

Before the Interview

- coordinate arrangements with the HR department and other areas/members of the organization involved in the interview process
- review the candidate's resume in advance
- establish a list of objective evaluation criteria based on the job description
- prepare a list of questions to ask each applicant

It is important to be knowledgeable of the types of questions to avoid asking in interviews. It is prudent to consult with your HR department for guidance in this area. Questions to avoid asking include:

- How old are you?
- How is your health?
- Are you married?
- Do you have children? How many?
- What type of child care arrangements do you have?
- Are you planning to have children?
- What does your spouse do for a living?¹

However, appropriate questions commonly asked during an interview may include:

- Why do you want to leave your current employer?
- What are your long- and short-term career goals?
- Why should we hire you?
- What is your biggest strength/ weakness?
- What salary are you looking for?
- Have you ever had any conflict with your boss? If yes, how did you handle it?
- How would your subordinates/ peers/managers describe you?
- How do you react when someone criticizes your work?
- How do you handle stress?
- How would you rate yourself in the following areas: planning, organizing, motivating, interacting with others?²

During the Interview

- provide a dedicated time for interviews, with no interruptions
- create a personable and comfortable environment to put the candidate at ease

- offer a tour of the department and/or other areas of the facility if appropriate
- introduce the candidate to other employees
- observe and listen carefully for verbal and nonverbal communication cues
- allow the job applicant to do most of the talking
- inform the candidate of your time-table for making a decision

After the Interview

- objectively compare the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate
- consider feedback from other employees who met the applicant
- verify credentials and check references, as needed
- select the candidate(s) best suited for the position

Selecting the Best Candidate

Depending on the type of position being filled, some organizations may create a team or committee to interview candidates. For instance, an applicant applying for a position as a health information educator may be asked to provide a presentation to other faculty members and/or meet with staff from other disciplines. This approach allows for a wide spectrum of feedback on the candidate's attitudes, cultural compatibility with the organization, and interaction skills. If a group interview is conducted, the team can provide immediate input by discussing the applicant's strengths and weaknesses and/or completing a candidate evaluation form.

Making the Offer

Offering the job and negotiating salary may be handled differently at each organization. In some settings, the department director may finalize these details, while other companies rely on the HR department to follow through with this phase of the process. Depending on the position, negotiations may include sign-on bonuses or reimbursement for relocation.

A candidate may ask for additional time to consider the offer before making a decision. If so, the employer should identify a reasonable time frame for notification. In some cases, the top candidate may decline the offer. So be prepared to extend the offer to another suitable candidate in a timely fashion. Occasionally, it becomes necessary to re-advertise and start the recruiting process all over again.

New Employees

Providing accurate and timely training to new employees is critical to assuring quality performance and retention of a valued human resource. Most organizations provide a formal orientation process, but departmental orientation procedures are important as well. For example, new HIM employees are generally required to review employee handbooks and sign confidentiality statements.

Some facilities use a checklist to assess training needs and to ensure that important aspects of employee training are covered in detail. With the proliferation of Web-based technology, many healthcare organizations are creating online training materials and resources, accessible by employees via the facility's intranet.

Such electronic training tools may include multimedia presentations followed by tests to assess the employee's level of retention and recall. In addition, some organizations are placing policies and procedures online for ease of access. Confidentiality training and guidelines are just one example of content that can be deployed electronically throughout the organization.

During the employee probationary period (generally three to six months), it is important to monitor performance closely to determine if the new employee is a good match for the position and the organization. If the new hire proves to be incompatible with the job and work environment, it may be necessary to terminate the employment agreement—not a simple decision.

This conclusion is often difficult because it makes employers question their original judgment about the individual. Seek guidance from the HR department and follow protocol for documenting reasons for termination. In these situations, the best we can strive for is to handle the matter as professionally and humanely as possible.

Trends in Telecommuting

Sophisticated networks, such as intranets and extranets, enable more employers to hire telecommuters. HIM functions that may fit well in a telecommuting environment include transcription and coding. As more people consider the quality-of-life advantages of working at home, HIM employers must become more flexible to attract and retain quality employees. This is especially true in areas experiencing a shortage of qualified job candidates.

As electronic patient record systems evolve, opportunities to use outsourcing and telecommuting services to keep pace with the constant demand to "do more with less" will increase. And recruiting employees with electronic tools can serve as a testing ground for finding computer literate job candidates who have the potential of becoming future HIM telecommuters.

This article is the second in a two-part series on how to use electronic resources in the employment job search and recruiting process. See "[Taking the Lead](#)" in July-August for a look at how electronic tools can assist job hunters in finding a job online.

Notes

1. Cunningham, Kathleen. "The Art of Interviewing," in *HIM Journeys: A Career Guide for Health Information Management Professionals*. Clearwater, FL: Picard Communications Inc., 1997: 117-138.
2. Ibid.

References

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