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Consultants, Outsourcing Companies Offer HIM a Little Help that Goes a Long Way

THE BEATLES SANG about getting by “With a Little Help from My Friends” in their 1967 hit song. This sound advice still stands today in both life and business—try as one may, it is impossible to do everything and know everything alone.

In health information management (HIM), there are times when HIM professionals need a little help from external consultants and outsourcing companies in order to solve problems, fine tune systems, or gain a new educated perspective on a task. The products and services featured in this Consulting and Outsourcing Resource Guide offer that helping hand on a wide range of HIM issues, from coding to transcription, release of information, and more.

AHIMA recently entered the consulting business, offering consulting services on information governance (IG) through its IGAdvisors®. IGAdvisors consulting is centered around IGHealthRate™, an assessment tool developed by AHIMA that charts out the 10 information governance competencies—such as privacy and security, data governance, and analytics—that are organized into the Information Governance Adoption Model (IGAM™). Each IGAM competency has a series of IG maturity markers that measure an organization’s current state on specific information governance initiatives—ranked on a scale of one to five. IGAdvisors helps healthcare organizations go through an IGHealthRate assessment, working with a diverse group of stakeholders in each organization to measure its appropriate level of maturity on the IGAM competencies and analyze their current state of IG implementation. (For more information, visit www.ighealthrate.com. To qualify for an IGHealthRate assessment, visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/IGHealthRate.)

The IGHealthRate tool is free to use, and healthcare providers can do the assessment on their own. But IGAdvisors can assist organizations in assessing each of the 77 maturity markers as well as analyzing the findings and offering a strategy on which areas of improvement an organization should prioritize and focus on first.

Sometimes trying to get all the different departmental stakeholders in the room together to do an IGHealthRate assessment and review the individual maturity markers as a group can be a difficult challenge. IGAdvisors can help expedite the process by being an outside force to lend urgency to the assessment, provide background and a level-set on the what and why of IG, and facilitate detailed IG competency discussions and analysis on an organization’s current state of IG, according to Kristi Fahy, RHIA, manager of IG, informatics, and standards at AHIMA and an IGAdvisors consultant.

Within 15 business days of an IGHealthRate assessment, IGAdvisors will provide an executive report detailing their findings, areas of opportunity, and recommended next steps. If organizations need help implementing an IG program or addressing specific initiatives within the IGAM competencies and maturity markers—for example, creating a records retention and disposition policy or launching a data governance project—IGAdvisors refers organizations to AHIMA’s IG Brand Partners and Supporters, whose expert consultants have been trained on IGAM and hold the new AHIMA-Approved IGAM Consultant certificate.

In addition to offering extra help and support, consultants and outsourcing companies provide a wide range of other benefits to healthcare organizations. As an outside entity, consultants bring a fresh set of eyes and a cool head to problems that may be perplexing an organization’s internal staff. “As a consultant, you have an outside perspective,” Fahy says. This neutral advice comes without bias or built-up emotion, and is informed through a consultant’s or outsourcing company’s direct experience working on similar problems at other organizations.

For example, a complimentary AHIMA IG assessment tool similar to IGHealthRate was previously used for self-evaluations, and showed that HIM professionals were ranking themselves much higher than the average score found through the current multi-disciplinary and consultant-led evaluations within IGHealthRate, Fahy says. Part of this was due to users’ active involvement and close proximity to particular initiatives, which made it difficult to identify where improvements could be made. “You don’t know what you don’t know when you don’t have all of the appropriate stakeholders around to assess the maturity markers and their content,” Fahy says.

A good consultant knows how to listen to people and distill a solution to issues without being critical of current processes, Fahy says. “One thing we always try to say [when we consult with an organization] is ‘Hey, listen, this isn’t an audit, it is an assessment to just figure out where you are with IG, and if you are lower that is okay. Just knowing where you are is the first step to making progress,’” Fahy says.
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