The 6 hottest HIT job skills for 2012

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The demand for capable IT specialists is growing and, according to Guillermo Moreno, vice president of recruiting firm Experis Healthcare, certain skills are bound to take the spotlight in 2012.

“This is an area that’s of interest and concern, given what we’re seeing in the marketplace,” Moreno said. “With the continuation of the build of the information technology movement in healthcare, we are seeing some sizable fractures in the healthcare space around human capital and human talent.”

With the New Year around the corner, we asked Moreno to look ahead and share with us the top six most in-demand skills for healthcare IT professionals in 2012.

1. ICD-10/5010 expertise. Moreno said with the movement to reach the audit function and compliance right in front of us, the demand in the marketplace for professionals is at an all-time high. “More and more organizations are beginning to road map themselves in ICD-10 migration,” he said. “Everyone understands what ICD-9 is and what it means to generally migrate to ICD-10, but there are few who have actually made the transition or are in the process of doing so.” Moreno said he’s seeing requests and demands both on the payer and provider side, as well as large government organizations looking for skilled professionals. This includes those with expertise in project management, program management, and coding. “Those are the three pretty major areas for people who understand ICD-10, and frankly, in this country, there isn’t a lot of experience in that space.” [Related: The top 4 jobs ICD-10 will place in high-demand.]

2. EMR and EHR implementation. The increased momentum and adoption of electronic health records is prevalent both for ambulatory and inpatient care. But, according to Moreno, with adoption comes voids and needs in the industry. “Some of the major software houses are tailoring their agendas around meaningful use and CPOE and other things that are required,” he said. “This includes quality measures and compliance in the future around payment. So when you look at that and who is in the marketplace today, there’s clearly a higher degree of contracts in place and requirements to deliver against inpatient and outpatient EMRs versus what’s in the marketplace that’s available.” He added that for certain implementation skill sets “there is a higher demand than there is availability.” [See also: The 6 hidden costs of EHRs.]

3. Applications know-how. “The other piece, both in the payer and provider space, is the development solution space,” said Moreno. This includes applications and data management, as organizations become more mature regarding solutions. “They’re beginning to fill the landscape and [are looking into] a lot of applications required to measure quality and standards,” he said. “So some increase in software development, software management, and application management. Yet, when you look at the marketplace, and in some cases, companies who own the solutions themselves, they’re having difficulty finding those skills.” [Related: NISTs 10 cloud computing requirements.]

4. Security and compliance skills. Both of which go hand-in-hand with where we are today in the industry and where we’re navigating to, said Moreno. “[This is] where information is collected and is required to move from one environment to another,” he continued. “There’s a notion of how do we protect that information and be HIPAA compliant and deal with PHI.” In the past, added Moreno, the industry was focused on introspective security. “And now, there’s a higher increase for skills in the information management security side of the business.” [See also: Why privacy compliance needn’t be so scary.]

5. Data management talents. Moreno said data management and data security is where he and his team have placed a lot of effort and emphasis. “It’s the complaint side of the business, so it’s important to understand how you manage and protect the information,” he said, and knowing how to protect information and

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address breaches from a compliance perspective. "Knowing how to have plans in place so you address the potential losses and breach of information and how to be protected in the future," added Moreno. "It's going to require some skill sets that aren't mainstream in healthcare; they are in other industries, so I think we're going to see a gap for a period then a movement of professionals who have that skill set in other industries, helping to address this need in healthcare." [Related: 3 tips for surviving an OCR breach audit.]

6. BI and analytics abilities. Moreno concluded business intelligence and analytics data is a way to "aggregate information in a better way and with better quality." But he sees the need for these skills as yet to come. "They aren't necessarily in the marketplace," he said. "There are tools, but they aren't as robust and mainstream as those the pharmaceutical industry has been using for a long time." The industry is starting to see a higher degree of attention on finding newer and more aggressive BI and analytics tools, he added, "which, in turn, will have a higher degree of demand for those professionals." [Q&A: On the politics and technologies of global predictive analytics.]

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