

Filling the Gap

Healthcare technology is an area that is primed for expansion, with increased focus from the government, the media and patients.

PAMELA DIXON, Founder of SSi-SEARCH, discusses in the April 2009 edition of Future Healthcare how this will shape filling open positions in the industry and her organization's view on what's to come.

See a Sneak Peek Below

FH: What are some of the challenges facing your industry?

PD: Ballooning demand. The stimulus package can take us to a whole new level in healthcare but you do have to ask, do we have the resources to handle it?

I can easily see a shortage among the top tier informatics leaders needed to lead organizations quickly through these technology transformations. Implementation teams needed to back them may become scarce. Many of these resources are already difficult to locate because of the complexity of what's needed in these roles. These are not plug-and-play implementations.

Some of my clients are hiring ahead of the curve and I think that's a smart thing to do. The major players in the industry are already "jockeying for first picks in the draft," if you will. To be competitive, every healthcare IT vendor has to have the right team in place to position and deliver quickly and effectively. Every healthcare system has to have the right team in place to meet their EHR implementation timelines.

FH: What does the changing political landscape have on the search business?

PD: In a word, growth. We are all lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time in healthcare technology. I am fortunate to have built the business in a way to be ready for this. We joke that healthcare IT used to be "in the basement." Computerized Medical Records is really out of the basement when the President and celebrities like Oprah Winfrey talk about the importance of these issues. I look forward to hearing Mr Quaid speak on this at HIMSS this year.

radically different is President Obama's stimulus package. To put it in perspective, injecting a \$19 billion investment into healthcare technology basically doubles the size of the healthcare technology industry. It's hard to calculate exactly how many jobs this could add overnight to healthcare IT, but I've heard more than two hundred thousand. That means healthcare IT will be growing at warp speed. Search firms that try to fill these complex EMR-related roles without direct industry experience will simply have a difficult time keeping up.

This is not about us being competitive with other search firms because I believe there will be more than enough business and there are some great people out there in search. It is about how the search business will meet demand for these complex roles before resources run dry. Not having direct industry experience poses a threat to the clients' ability to meet their technology goals on time. That's what this is all about. Basically, if you're not intimately familiar with the job that needs to get done, you are just hurling candidates at the client and usually this amounts to wasting their time.

Future Healthcare: What is SSi-SEARCH and what do you do to differentiate your firm?

Pamela Dixon: SSi-SEARCH is an executive search firm focused on the recruitment of the full continuum of healthcare informatics roles. For example, if you think of a healthcare leader, such as a hospital CIO or CMIO, as the capstone of a pyramid — we cover those senior level roles — then we source every stone in that pyramid to support those executives. So we become a one-stop shop for the executive leaders in healthcare. Our clients are hospitals, health plans, consulting firms, and healthcare IT (HCIT) suppliers. This range works really well for us because our clients benefit from candidates crossing over. Too much "in-breeding" in one segment of our industry is not good for clients or candidates.

How we differentiate ourselves is through each associate's hands-on experience in the healthcare technology industry. This is important to our clients because healthcare technology is and always has been extremely complex, changing, and political. So a direct knowledge of this industry has always been important, but never more than it is today. What is



PAMELA DIXON is the Founder and Managing Partner of SSi-SEARCH, Inc. Prior to launching SSi, Ms. Dixon has 17 years of hands-on experience in the healthcare technology industry both as a top performing salesperson with national accounts and as a consultant. She has worked with mature healthcare technology companies such as Cerner and VHA as well as emerging technology companies such as ActaMed, later acquired by Healtheon / WebMD. She earned BA and BGS degrees from the University of Kentucky as well as studying abroad (Sorbonne).

For additional information about SSi-SEARCH, please visit www.ssi-search.com