

Healthcare's Staffing Problem

Dr. Rebecca Quammen - Quammen Health Care Consultants

www.quammengroup.com

Following multiple interesting contributions to *Finance Monthly* in 2015, Dr. Rebecca Quammen catches us up on the current state of the healthcare sector, staffing problems, and the industry moving forward into 2016

In the current healthcare IS environment, staffing needs are constantly evolving. With ever increasing operational and capital budget pressures, software vendor transitions, product upgrades, regulatory requirements, and the emerging resource burdens created by interoperability and analytics, organizations face enormous challenges. Time is more critical than ever and organizations need creative, experienced staffing solutions to meet their staffing demands. Alternate staffing solutions have the potential to bridge the gap when non-emergent and emergent staffing situations exist.

When you consider the diversity of roles required to maintain and advance complex information systems you find that technical skills alone are insufficient. You must also have resources with rich clinical, departmental, financial, and administrative expertise.

Is Your Organization Asking the Right Questions?

The days of simply posting a job description with the human resources department or securing the assistance of a recruiter are fading.

- How can we best identify, access, and leverage talent regardless of geographic and physical location?
- How can we meet the needs of the emerging share and service economy workforce where lifestyle and control over work conditions are primary considerations for this new generation of workers?
- How can we leverage the internet and other collaboration tools to support work?
- How can we flex capabilities to meet current demands?
- How can we build nimble teams that are highly experienced in handling the dynamic nature of projects?

- How do we leverage knowledge from other organizations who have done what we are attempting to do?
- How do we find resources who understand business and clinical processes as well as technology?

The answers to these questions live in our ability to expand our thinking about jobs, roles, and work. Each generation has introduced challenges in the workforce but possibly none as great as those that are emerging.

Combining Process Knowledge with Technology Experience for Exceptional Results

Healthcare is data driven! Electronic Health Records and other physiological monitoring and data collection systems have provided a rich data foundation that is nothing short of transformative for healthcare. Information systems staff can no longer focus on tasks, projects, and simple fulfillment – rather they must bring new skills to the table to partner with clinicians, physicians, and executives. Innovation is key to quality care and competitive positioning but progressive application of IT is central to innovation. Traditional IT roles must evolve to serve this greater need for collaboration and application of technology to solve problems.

The Changing Workforce

To further complicate existing staffing challenges, we must also acknowledge that the available workforce is changing dramatically. Two emerging trends impacting the ability to attract and retain resources are teleworking and selective employment.

Teleworking allows workers to achieve lifestyle goals while providing companies access to talent regardless of geography or physical location. While not an entirely new concept, teleworking is gaining in popularity and momentum as a way to reduce traditional consulting travel expense and to allow ready access to skills that do not require local or

onsite presence. Internet and collaboration tools have opened doors to this method of remote work. It has also opened doors to talent that might otherwise have been unavailable due to physical constraints.

Selective employment represents a significant emerging social trend in the world. Many highly qualified resources are gravitating toward professional lives that support work-life balance. Specialization, Internet access, and control over working hours and assignments have fueled the growing attractiveness of selective employment.

Current Quammen Offerings

Quammen has developed effective staffing engagement models that are implemented using a broad range of talent, knowledge, and expertise. We work alongside your team with staffing solutions created just for you.

Quammen offers non-traditional consulting and staff augmentation services to resolve your ever-changing staffing needs. We deliver transformative solutions by evaluating your current staffing and matching the ideal clinical, financial, and technical experts to your unique needs. Vacant positions will negatively impact your entire organizations. Let us help you manage resource costs by effectively addressing:

- Opportunity Costs
- Recruitment Costs
- Training Costs

Sourcing talent in a variety of ways insures healthcare systems have access to resources that offer new insight into their challenges. The ability to align and realign resources as needed to solve problems is best accomplished with a vast and fluid workforce. Most organizations can not accomplish this through traditional IT department staffing.

See overleaf for Becky's Healthcare feature from our June 2015 issue



Spotlight On

Healthcare

Dr. Rebecca Quammen
Quammen Health Care Consultants

www.quammengroup.com

Quammen Health Care Consultants Founder and CEO Dr. Rebecca Quammen is a healthcare business and information systems veteran, recognised as an advocate for transforming healthcare with information management solutions. Her 30-year career in healthcare includes senior management positions in large healthcare provider organisations, at the nation's largest healthcare software vendor, and with leading healthcare consulting practices.

What are the typical difficulties encountered by those that operate in the healthcare sector in the USA? How are these difficulties usually mitigated?

US Healthcare, since the passage of the ARRA HITECH Act in 2009, has been almost singularly focused on the deployment of certified electronic health records to meet meaningful use requirements. Certification and meaningful use are terms defined by law. Certification has forced vendor software companies to focus their R & D efforts on annual requirements, believed by many to have stifled innovation over the last several years. Meaningful use is viewed as anything but meaningful at this point with many feeling the clinical patient story has been lost in the required automation and capture of a limited data set. While meeting the requirements for this partially incentivised investment in electronic records, healthcare delivery systems C-suites have been distracted to the point of neglect of other initiatives and many are pushing back now.

Balancing cost while delivering quality care are the two most prevalent drivers in US Healthcare. Emerging initiatives such as value based purchasing, accountable care organisations, and

population health management dominate the media and organisational narrative. Yet, all of this is unknown territory being defined locally, regionally, and at the national level – prompting alignment, mergers, and in some instances collapse of traditional delivery systems.

New entrants to the US healthcare stage include non-traditional providers such as retail pharmacies (Walgreens Boots Alliance) and Wal Mart (a major mid-range retailer in rural communities) offering standalone clinic services have the potential to forever change the face of family medicine in their respective communities. These are among the initiatives that threaten traditional models familiar to the healthcare provider C-Suite, requiring innovative and resourceful responses to remain viable.

What challenges usually arise when executive staff leave? What services can be provided to ensure that when staff do leave, the difficulties that arise can be mitigated?

Loss of continuity is the greatest challenge from my vantage point. Initiatives stall pending identification of new resources to fill vacancies.

I am a strong supporter of alternative staffing strategies – not just to fill vacancies when they occur but to ensure the best operational and executive resources are available for any initiative. Outsourcing specific functions or roles to gain superior and dedicated levels of skill and expertise with broad exposure that may otherwise not be available seems the best insurance against stagnation of ideas, stalled initiatives, and forward progress. US healthcare available resourcing at all levels – executive, staff, physician, and clinical - varies significantly between the largest university settings and the local community providers. Alternative staffing strategies can close these gaps by ensuring high quality talent is available when needed to fill positions – short and long term – regardless of setting.

In what areas do private healthcare facilities commonly lose the most money? What services can be provided to help these facilities become more cost effective?

Speaking in general terms, healthcare is like any system where delivery of a product and service must be managed to the lowest cost for the highest quality. The overriding difference between healthcare and other industries is the unique