

## **Healthcare CIOs Cite Staffing Opportunities – Shake, Rattle and Roll**

**By Roberta Rochman, RN, MBA, Career Columnist, Atlanta Examiner**

**Published October 20, 2010**

Hospitals are rapidly implementing clinical electronic health record (EHR) systems to qualify for achieving stimulus funding under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) portion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

This information is fundamental in determining how you may choose to use your talents if you are already in the healthcare information technology (HIT) field or if you are thinking about choosing it as a career path. In fact, some estimates suggest there could be a 50,000 – 100,000+ shortfall of qualified HIT staff.

Data from the recent survey of Chief Information Officers (CIOs) by the [College of Health Information Management Executives \(CHIME\)](#) is significant in understanding the concerns and needs of this key group of employers.

The CHIME HIT staffing shortages survey cites 60% of the participating CIOs commented that workforce inadequacy will possibly (51%) and definitely (10%) will affect their chances to implement an EHR and receive stimulus funding. More than 70% of the survey respondents state their organization lacks the experienced personnel to implement clinical applications.

About 76% are concerned about retaining current staff and of those 97% are thinking of using flexible scheduling and/or telecommuting; 70% will provide funding toward staff education and 64% are considering increasing pay scales.

I checked in Ron Strachan, SVP & CIO of [WellStar](#), an Atlanta-area based healthcare organization and CHIME member and former Board Chair. “At the recent GA-HIMSS meeting, my contemporaries and I discussed that we are all scrambling to identify candidates who can fill our open positions for EHR and other Meaningful Use related project roll-out.” Strachan continues, “The newest CHIME survey will enable us to use the techniques of our colleagues across the nation in retaining and hiring qualified individuals.”

According to the survey, CIO’s plan to cope with the need to employ new staff by appointing third-party consultants (36%), hiring from within the organization and retrain (18%) and using recruiters to find and place qualified staff (13%).

Pamela Dixon is the Managing Partner of [SSi-SEARCH](#), an executive search firm exclusively focused on the recruitment of healthcare technology leadership. Dixon states, “It is true that the HIT industry is growing at warp speed. Every day we hear news about dramatic hiring needs required to meet Meaningful Use benchmarks.” She adds, “Clearly, Meaningful Use



requires that *clinicians use* the software. Therefore a direct understanding of clinical workflow has never been as important in implementing technology as it is in today's fast-paced environment. This combined skill set, clinical and IT experience is most urgently needed. Not having the right resources, especially the right leadership, poses a threat to my clients' ability to meet their overall strategic goals and puts them at risk."

I'm reminded of Bill Haley's song, "[Shake, Rattle and Roll](#)". I think of CIOs in the dilemma to 'shake' up their organizations to implement clinical systems rapidly. They also must 'rattle' their current staff by showing appreciation to them and offer new methods to educate or retain them. The CIO must also 'roll' out programs to obtain new staff members. Let the good times roll – yes, I know, that's yet another song.



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Roberta Rochman, RN, MBA has proven success in her 25-plus-year career. She's had international roles in not-for-profit and for-profit hospitals, medical research centers, publicly-traded and private companies. She is a nurse, business leader, public speaker, facilitator, author and educator. Roberta is active in the PTA's cultural arts committee, Arcado Elementary Local School Counsel in Gwinnett County and the Atlanta-based Chelko Foundation. She is a certified hypnosis-for-birthing practitioner and a registered yoga instructor.

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