Talent Stackers

Darin Coleman

New descriptors of today's professionals are popping up everywhere — multitalented, transliterate, cross-professionals, talent stackers. Employers are seeking individuals with deep knowledge or experience in one area while being able to "speak the language" of other disciplines. Individuals who can cross-pollinate their skills and knowledge are in high demand.

Stackable Opportunities

A key example is in the field of Health Information Technology, (Health IT). Health IT is a hybrid field, combining the knowledge of healthcare and information technology. It offers great opportunities for people currently working in either medical or IT fields to cross-train and advance in their careers.

In 2010, Normandale received an $800,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop a Health IT training program. The goal was to train professionals for the significant changes impacting healthcare systems. In Normandale's immersive cross-training program, individuals with traditional backgrounds in healthcare gain stackable skills in areas like workflow, quality and IT. At the same time, IT, quality and administrative professionals build their skills and credentials in the world of patient care. The program is delivered online and provides relevant practicums to boost greater confidence and skills.

Almost 500 Health IT professionals have been successfully trained through the program. Graduates are working for companies like HealthPartners, the Minnesota Department of Health, Park Nicollet, United Healthcare, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and Prime Therapeutics.

Alicia Nesvacil

Successful Talent Stackers

Alicia Nesvacil completed the Health IT program in 2011, while working for HealthPartners. Nesvacil saw an opportunity to build on her current skills through the program and jumped on it. She is now a Senior Consulting Analyst for HealthPartners.

"After completing the Health IT training, I spread the word to others in HealthPartners about the benefits of the program" said Nesvacil. "Since going through the program, my assignments have

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been more enterprise-level and incorporate both IT and operational areas. The knowledge I gained in the program played a big role in that step."

Darin Coleman had some experience in Health IT, but joined the program to get a more diverse understanding of the field. Prior to starting the program, Coleman was laid off from his job. However, through the program, he gained a contract position with Optum and was eventually hired full-time.

Jennifer Ortiz originally came to Normandale to get an associate's degree in computer technology. She had been working at Park Nicollet for 11 years prior to signing up for the program. As a single mom with three kids, her time was in short supply. Ortiz heard about the program in the fall of 2011, and was encouraged by a coworker to do it.

During her time in the program, Ortiz gained a great deal of knowledge of the healthcare industry and how it relates to information technology in today's world. The program also placed heavy emphasis on networking and gaining contacts. Building relationships put Ortiz's career trajectory in motion.

"As soon as I finished the program, I received an email from one of my networking contacts in IT indicating that he had received a promotion and thought I would be great for his old position," said Ortiz. "I applied and was hired as an Application Analyst I. I went from working my day-to-day job with no possibilities of rising much higher, to endless opportunities to learn and excel in my career. Six months ago, I was promoted to an Application Analyst II."

Sidney Salehi was in the middle of a career transition from finance to IT and Health Informatics. Salehi had just finished her Master's degree in health informatics, but wanted to develop more practical skills. She decided to enroll in the Health IT Program. Her choice paid dividends in the form of a position as a Health Informatician at the Office of Health Information Technology at the Minnesota Department of Health.

"The Health IT program and my job started around the same time," said Salehi. "It ended up being a beneficial experience for me to match what I was learning in the program with my current position. I believe that my participation in the Health IT training program helped me get the job."

Sidney Salehi

To learn more about the Health IT program see page 30 or visit www.MNHealthIT.com

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