

# A COACH Focus on Resource Capacity Issues and Near-Term Solutions

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**C**areer development is a cornerstone of COACH's mandate; this is reflected in the "Advance Health Informatics as a

Profession" initiative. The strategic goal, achieved and available through the *Health Informatics Professionalism (HIP)* Program, provides a variety of services and tools to a wide audience including students, recent graduates and experienced practitioners considering a career change to health informatics (HI). Today the HIP program remains one of COACH's main areas of focus and is based on three pillars known as the HIP Core Competencies: Capacity, Careers and Credentials.

Based on the landmark *Health Informatics and Health Information Management (HI & HIM) Human Resources Report* released in November 2009 that outlines the serious risk in labour and skill capacity shortages to the successful implementation of electronic health information systems (EHIS), it has been identified that human resource capacity planning measures should be a priority to ensure government investments deliver the promised benefits. In order to achieve this objective, national monitoring and forecasting initiatives need to be put in place in order to identify a collective strategy to address these skill shortages. This includes:

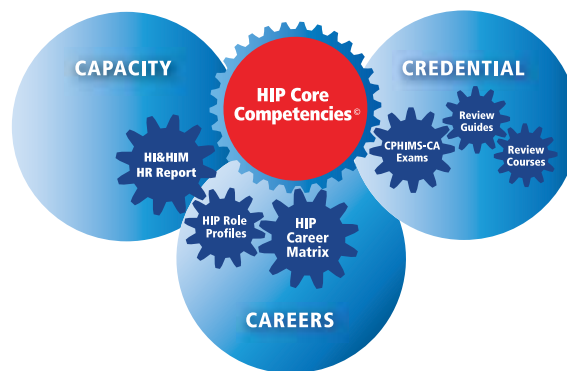
- strengthening the capacity of professional

- associations to deliver development training,
- expanding the role of skill certification programs already in place and
- expanding co-op and internship programs to accelerate the integration.

While the *HI & HIM Human Resources Report* identifies strategies to address these labour risk shortages, the key recommendations provide long-term national strategies, which will be addressed by COACH and its partners in a collaborative effort. COACH has therefore formed the HIP Resources Task Force to identify the interim actions to continue the momentum generated by the study and assist COACH members in addressing the resource capacity challenges faced within the HI industry today.

- There is a lack of senior HI professionals in the following roles - Solution Architects, Business Analysts, Technical Leads and Change Management Specialists.
- The information about HI employers and HI programs is very diverse. Individuals must conduct their own research on potential employers and skills programs. Generic and broad job descriptions, making it hard to find the right candidate.
- The recruitment cycle for resources is too long (up to 72 days in some cases) and does not match the reality and speed at which healthcare projects progress.
- There is a lack of a clear understanding about which resources possess which skills within an organization, resulting in staff that may not be properly utilized or the organization failing to reap the full benefits of the in-house skills.
  - Due to the shortage of healthcare resources, currently deployed resources may not be optimally aligned to tasks which best matches their skill set.
  - Due to the rapid advancement of healthcare technologies and standards, the learning curve for new entrants into the HI field seems high.

## Health Informatics Professionalism (HIP™)



### Current Capacity Issues

There have been some changes in the environment since the report was released. Some of the current capacity issues consistent across Canada include the following.

### Near-term Measures

The task force has identified the following near-term measures organizations can take to help with resource capacity issues.

- Ensure organizations are allowed to hire the full-time resources required to support their healthcare initiatives and programs.
- Shorten the recruitment cycle of resources.
- Update recruiting tools and skills

- assessments to match HI specific needs.
- Further break down role descriptions into specific responsibilities, mapping closely to the HIP Career Matrix.
- Realign classification and compensation models against HI roles.
- Provide access to training programs to allow resources to expand their skill sets to be eligible for other opportunities within the organization.
- Improve internal alignment of existing resources and their skill sets, against healthcare roles.
- Focus on retention of existing employees by conducting more frequent employee engagement surveys

- Promote the field – make HI an attractive profession.

The task force will continue to refine the recommendations and turn them into actionable items which will benefit COACH members and the broader healthcare community.

The mandate of the task force will involve understanding the intricacies of the HI key labour and skill shortages with a focus on the immediate risks posed to Canadian healthcare endeavours. This will involve the following objectives.

1. Advancing the key findings and recommendations from the *HI & HIM*

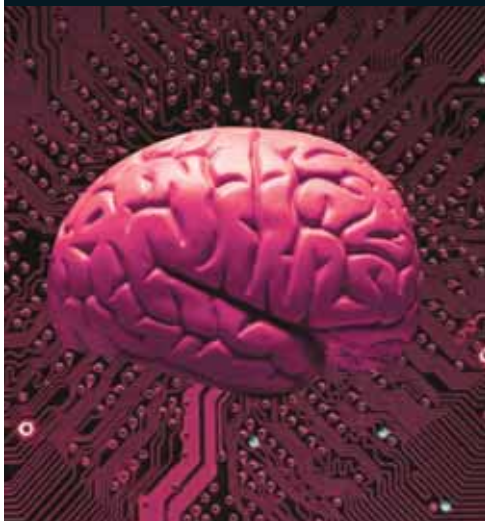
*Human Resources Report* as it applies to the Canadian HI industry

2. Developing and enhancing career and labour planning tools for COACH's institutional members and other HI organizations.

In addition, the task force will continue to raise awareness of the potential capacity issues and solutions with key eHealth governing bodies and agencies that oversee and administer large scale healthcare implementations.

**Interested or want to get involved?  
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