



CRA: An Individual and Organization Hallmark of Success

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As the new public member on the Radiology Administration Certification Commission (RACC), I have learned a lot in the past 7 months about the importance of radiology administration certification.

And it's occurred to me that what I have learned is that radiology administration certification is not only about personal growth and education, but it is also about public growth and education.

Last fall, a certified radiology administrator (CRA) colleague at work suggested my name when the public member seat on the RACC board became available. The commission's mission sounded interesting, and I knew that serving in such a capacity would broaden my horizons and make me a better marketer. So, I agreed to have my name passed along for consideration, and I was chosen to serve a 3 year term.

What I didn't know was that my association with the RACC would also make me an advocate for certification that is as important in the radiology world as CPA certification is in the finance world.

What I didn't know was that my association with the RACC would give me greater respect and understanding of the certification my colleague proudly carries and maintains and has worked so hard to achieve.

What I didn't know was that CRA certification is as important to an organization as it is to the person who achieved it.

What I didn't know was that CRA certification is a win for the professional who is credentialed, a win for the organization that employs the professional and, most importantly, a win for the patient who is a recipient of care at an organization that values this certification.

What I do know, after spending 7 years in the healthcare field, is that because of technology and science, this is a field that is constantly evolving. One can never become too comfortable with the way we do things today because, sure enough, the way we do things today will be substantially different tomorrow! Working in such an environment is as challenging as it is

exciting. The learning curve is always high and there are stretch goals aplenty for professionals to aspire toward. And becoming a CRA is a sure way to let your colleagues and organization know that you reach for the stars, are committed to continual personal growth, and want to be recognized as an individual who stands apart from the crowd.

As a result, sitting for the CRA exam is not for the faint hearted. In fact, I have learned, it is daunting enough that AHRA offers a workshop to help better prepare candidates for the exam.

To become a CRA, an individual must be prepared to exhibit excellence in 5 domains:

- Human Resources Management
- Asset Resource Management
- Fiscal Management
- Operations Management
- Communication and Information Management

Although I am not a radiology administrator, as a director of public relations and marketing for a medium sized community hospital, these are areas of management in which I, too, hope to excel. And they also represent areas in which I want my employees to excel.

In the simplest of terms, as professionals, these are all areas of management we must be proficient in if we are to be viewed as top achievers in our workplaces.

CRA certification takes that idea one step farther. Achieving such certification lets the healthcare world know that a certified individual is not simply high performing in these areas, but excels in these areas. Certification is independent verification of the professional's skill set.

CRA certification cuts across all levels of the organization in a healthcare environment.

For example, in the human resources component, it is proof the individual can effectively recruit and retain staff, understand and enforce the organization's mission, and can relate

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regional and national market information to compensation and benefits in their own environment.

In asset resource management, certification means the individual is skilled in negotiation techniques, knows how to get the best price when making capital purchases, and is skilled in creating an ongoing equipment maintenance program.

With today's tight dollars, the ability to maximize revenue and minimize expense all while maintaining high standards in patient care and safety is more important than ever. CRA certification means an individual is skilled in accounting principles and practices, the budget process, strategic planning, and analyzing business information to meet organizational needs.

While many professionals understand how to run their department, CRA certification also tests an individual's ability to do that while also maintaining high customer service standards, establishing key industry partnerships and writing policies and procedures following federal, state, and other regulatory agencies.

Finally, CRA certification means an individual is an effective communicator. Those who achieve the title of CRA have

proven, among other things, that they can foster interdisciplinary communication and collaboration as well manage business and patient information by putting electronic and/or manual systems in place to ensure integrity, confidentiality, and security.

Hopefully, this snapshot of what it takes to become a CRA has led you, the reader, to the same conclusion that I have reached after less than a year with this commission: CRA certification needs to become as standard of achievement in healthcare in the same manner that CPA certification is a standard of achievement in finance circles.

Such certification is a hallmark of an individual's success and, as such, reflects favorably by the organization that encourages and supports this certification.

By starting to include this certification as a desired candidate quality in job descriptions, healthcare organizations set a higher standard for themselves and their patients.

And in doing so, healthcare organizations are also making a statement that tells employees and patients alike that they strive to be the best so that they can offer the best care possible. After all, isn't that what it's all about?