

# HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATIONS UNITE TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR INDUSTRY'S WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

By Tony Burke, Vice President, American Hospital Association



Faced with an increasingly complex set of challenges, health care organizations have joined forces to tackle their industry's career development and recruiting issues. For years individual healthcare associations have been working with employers to help them recruit talented individuals, many of them successfully doing so through association job boards. However, an increasing number of associations have realized that the career development needs go well beyond simply job posting.

In 2008 the National Healthcare Career Network (NHCN) was developed by a small group of forward thinking organizations concerned about the current and future state of the healthcare workforce. "The number of unfilled healthcare positions is staggering. We became involved as a founding partner of the NHCN because we want to direct employers to associations, where the talent lies," stated John H. Graham IV, President and CEO, ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership. In less than two years the number of members has grown to over 200 healthcare associations, representing more than two million individual members.

The NHCN links together the participating members' job boards on a single technology platform. Positions that are posted to one job board appear on all relevant job boards. This provides access to a wider array of jobs for association members seeking career opportunities while also providing employers with access to a much broader range of candidates.

"Because associations offer extensive training, networking and certification programs, we believe candidates who are affiliated with healthcare associations are better prepared. Nation-wide hospitals employ more than 5 million people; we are committed to the National Healthcare Career Network because we want unmitigated access to the kind of talent associations provide," offers Cathy Sewell, Executive Director, American Society of Healthcare Human Resources Association.



## More than Just a Job Board

However, to characterize the NHCN as an aggregated job board would be to sell it considerably short. The NHCN is about building a community, building a system and network of aligned organizations to ripple out the message of how we serve workforce issues.

The NHCN is bringing together associations and employers to have more sweeping discussions about the workforce of today and tomorrow. Advisory Councils, summits and even focus groups are being convened across the country to provide forums for idea exchange and open dialog.

At a recent NHCN event – the 2010 NHCN Healthcare Workforce Forum – associations and employers came together to discuss workforce challenges and determine ways that they could work together as a community to solve them.

Frederick Berg, Director of Marketing and Business Development for the National Alliance of Wound Care (NAWC), shared his perspective on the meeting.

*"NAWC has a niche focus within the healthcare field. In the past, it seemed as though there was more of a 'competition' with some other healthcare associations. As a member of the National Healthcare Career Network, we are thrilled to be working in concert with so many organizations in our field, who are committed like we are, to making a difference in workforce readiness. We are prepared to work directly with the employers to become the resource they need. The NHCN is a perfect fit for us. Today was great!"*

An attendee representing employer needs added his thoughts on the day. "From attending the NHCN Healthcare Workforce Forum, I have a much better understanding of how employers and professional associations can leverage each other's knowledge and capabilities to address critical workforce issues," said James Graham, Director of Talent Acquisition, St. Joseph Mercy Health System.

In addition to job board functionality, the NHCN is building a knowledge center so individuals exploring healthcare careers can find meaningful information to help them make appropriate decisions about their career path. Providing access to this career data helps associations reinforce their commitment to advancing members' professional development.

Scholarship programs have also been established by the NHCN to help fuel job candidates of the future. It's not just about filling job postings for today but about filling the talent pool for years to come.

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## The Power of Associations

Hundreds of associations coming together to address an industry-wide issue both underscores the need in the marketplace and also highlights the power of associations uniting as a strong force to solve problems.

There are organizations that align associations and create job boards but not in a way that fulfills and fosters the independence of those organizations and further reinforces the individual brands – all while strengthening ties to its membership. The NHCN is powerful due to the strength of its individual parts. We want to reinforce that and have people connect with the association.

## Meaningful Member Benefits

The NHCN technology platform provides employers with an effective and efficient way to reach multiple audiences at the same time. A single posting through an association site is populated on all relevant NHCN member sites saving time and money.

The older way of providing access to job postings through relationships with commercial job boards didn't provide members with a service that they couldn't obtain on their own. It also handed over the membership information to the commercial provider. The NHCN model maintains all information for its members only and each association exclusively owns their own valuable data.

As the NHCN establishes even greater scale it becomes the place that job seekers go to gain access to the largest and widest array of jobs available in the healthcare field. By accessing the NHCN through association websites the member relationships are further solidified. The resulting tight bond that is established around career recruitment, retention and advice makes NHCN members the go-to source for highly qualified, engaged talent.

The NHCN also generates a significant revenue stream for its members. Associations are able to funnel these non-dues revenues into continued development of programs, products and services for their members. Additionally, this incremental revenue enables organizations to support their primary mission of supporting and enabling their members.



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## A Call to Action



Founding partner, AHA has set a challenge to all healthcare related organizations who have an interest in making sure their healthcare system is properly and adequately staffed at all levels.

The challenge is to align and join forces so that we can be the most powerful, the most effective career strategy in healthcare today – so that it is owned and managed by healthcare, it is designed by healthcare and it is staffed by healthcare. It is my challenge to those organizations looking to play an important role in career development and recruitment to join the NHCN.



**National Healthcare  
Career Network**

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