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Career Adviser

Inter

By FRAN QUITTEL
JANUARY 11, 1999

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Dear Career Adviser:I'm a student pursuing an MIS degree with a focus in health care consulting. Do you have any advice or information that would be of help to me? -- Lynn in Langford

What

Dear Lynn:

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Skills in health care information systems or medical informatics are in high demand because of the convergence of several factors: an emphasis on cost-cutting, plus technology and biotech advances. Essentially, the field is booming, with lots of jobs available. To give you an idea of the size of the field, consider all the applications of the technology used in medical diagnostics, such as compressing radiology films and shipping them over phone lines, designing Web sites for patient care and education, accessing huge patient medical records databases, and even the more traditional large-system consulting and implementation used in management of national HMOs and large medical complexes.

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Philip Lohman, director of First Consulting Group in Long Beach, Calif., says "people get started in IT in health care the same way they do in other industries." If you do that, he says, "you will move up faster with a four-year computer science or [electrical engineering] degree." Other people may start in patient care or clinical areas -- or even accounting or finance - and then shift focus when they get involved in an IT planning or implementation project. Check out <http://informatics.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu> (click on "educational opportunities" for programs across the U.S.). People who work in health care systems understand technology and also tend to be people-oriented.

Dear Career Adviser:

I recently started a systems analyst position at a company

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where I will be developing online analytical processing (OLAP) Web-based reports and applications for a government agency using IBM's Focus Six and WebFocus by Information Builders. I'm trying to determine if OLAP and data warehousing are good areas to get in to for the future. What about using the Internet for database access, reports and applications? Will products like Focus Six and WebFocus launch my information technology career into the next millennium, or are they too specialized? -- Focused on OLAP

Dear Focused:

Many savvy headhunters agree with David Hayes, president of Boston-based HireMinds, who says, "OLAP is a niche field which is definitely growing, especially as we see major companies such as Microsoft with its Plato product entering into it." And corporate intranets are being used more to access data warehouses, a trend that will continue as the new technology improves. And both Hayes and Dru Lesnick, director of network operations at Data Processing Independent Consultant's Exchange, a Web site that specializes in computer-related jobs, recommend combining OLAP and data warehousing with Web integration to create great new opportunities. But beware: OLAPReport co-author Nigel Pendse (www.olapreport.com) says Focus is old-fashioned technology and therefore more likely to lead to a dead-end career maintaining wonky reporting systems rather than the latest technology. For more information on data warehousing, check out www.datawarehousing.com/newsgroups.htm and the list server at www.datawarehousing.com/list.as. Neither is for recruiters or headhunters, says Paul Marangoni at datamirror.com.

Dear Career Adviser:

I'm an IT professional with 20 years of experience. Originally from Odessa, Ukraine, I am now employed in the U.S. and have been living in Ohio since May 1, 1998, when I had a J-1 visa. My employer petitioned for my H-1B visa, which I received on Oct. 1, 1998. This visa expires June 1, 2001. However, I am not being paid. Must the company that hired me (the H-1B petitioner) pay me? What recourse do I have? Can I change employers? I am not certain where to go or what to do. I want to collect my October-through-December wages. -- Out of money in OHIO

Dear Ohio:

According to immigration attorney Charles J. Favata in White Plains, N.Y., although your employer is a contract staffing company, it still must provide a specific job for you and pay you at least 95% of the prevailing wage to obtain your H-1B visa. If you want to change employers, you need to find

another to sponsor you. You might wish to consult an attorney, who you may find by contacting the American Bar Association at (800) 285-2221 (www.aba.org) or by looking in your phone directory for the state or county bar association listing. For Cleveland, try the Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service at (216) 696-3532.

Second, to collect back pay, contact your state's labor commissioner or equivalent. To find your state's labor commissioner, go to AskJeeves, www.askjeeves.com or Hotbot, www.hotbot.com.

For example, in San Francisco, you would contact the Labor Commissioner of the State of California, Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Labor Standards Enforcement at (415) 557-7200.





For Ohio, if your employer grosses less than \$500,000 annually, call the Wage and Hour Division at (614) 644-2450.

If your employer grosses more than \$500,000 annually, you should call the state labor department's Federal Wage and Hour Division at (614) 469-5677.

On the Web, check out www.immigration.com, which also maintains FAQ lists for alt.visa.us and misc.immigration.usa Usenet newsgroups. (The FAQ is at rtfm.mit.edu.) Attorney Rajiv S. Khanna, who hosts the FAQ, cautions that your employer might have to pay fines or penalties, but, realistically, you probably won't receive a dime.

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