

Next Generation Web-Based Education Gets Early Rave Reviews

You may think it impossible to cite the successes of a venture just being launched. Home Care Information Network CEO Tom Williams, however, is doing just that, based on industry reaction to his company's recently launched, web-based educational venture. Opening its doors this spring, HCIN is already getting rave reviews from users, state associations and the industry's leading experts, who are developing educational content to be streamed over the Internet at a rapid pace.

HCIN utilizes state-of-the-art *rich media* technology to stream seminars developed specifically for home care and hospice providers over the Internet. No special software is needed to access educational content and individuals can participate in seminars or workshops at any time from any location with an Internet connection.

Williams describes HCIN as a collaborative venture involving his company, Wisconsin-based Stony Hill Management, state home care associations throughout the U.S. and educational experts from all industry segments. "The idea for HCIN grew out of a meeting I had nearly two years ago with selected association executives and representatives from several technology companies. After more than a day of discussion, we came to the conclusion that education is the number one factor to ensure providers successfully address the 'coming storm' that is certain to result from more than 70 million aging baby boomers, dramatic reimbursement changes, nursing shortages and the integration of technology into virtually every aspect of home care."

"There are three measures of success we are tracking," Williams says, "and right now all are trending in a very positive direction." The measures he uses to assess HCIN progress come directly from viewers, state associations and educational experts.

Viewers Weigh In

Over the last year, Williams' company has conducted three surveys of on-line seminar participants and he reports that results from more than 200 respondents have been overwhelmingly positive. "I am most impressed with our recent survey of viewers who previewed a 10-part coding seminar series we produced with Lisa Selman-Holman. The results speak for themselves."

- 100% of viewers think video streaming is an effective way to deliver training and would like to see more educational events available.
- 100% of viewers rated their overall HCIN educational experience as *excellent* (70%) or *good* (30%) and all said the technology was easy to use.
- Nearly 2/3 (65%) of viewers said they preferred Internet-based video streaming over an in-person seminar, and an additional 30% said it was about the same.

Based on viewer response thus far, Williams expects HCIN will have a profound impact on home care education. "Audio conferences and in-person events are home care training mainstays. Over our three surveys, however, no one has expressed a preference for audio over video and about 80% of respondents have given video streaming favorable ratings in comparison to live events."

Associations Get On Board

Williams views associations as critical to HCIN's success and refers to them as partners in this venture. "We began sharing information with state executives last summer when we incorporated HCIN, and immediately got a positive reaction from several key states that convinced us we were headed in the right direction." Since then, Williams reports, 19 associations have gotten on board as partners and a half dozen more are "dipping their toe in the water" offering HCIN's Advanced Beneficiary Notice seminar to their members. "I fully expect these states will get on board after their members experience HCIN. We have set a year-end target of 30 partners."

According to Williams, HCIN is putting its money where its mouth is when it comes to association partnerships. "This is not your typical affinity deal," he says. "Our partners get a significant portion of net revenue and are involved in key decisions on content and pricing. Several states have made a commitment beyond just partnering and have become investors in HCIN, and we have two state association executives on our Board."

Faculty Members Sign On

The reaction to HCIN among leading industry experts has been equally impressive. HCIN began recruiting faculty last fall, and has been very successful. "An underlying principle of this entire effort has been to bring together world-class faculty and to provide them a technology-driven vehicle to deliver their message to a broad audience," Williams said. "The experts we have approached clearly recognize the value of the significant infrastructure investment we have made and hope to capitalize on it."

As of mid-March, the list of national experts that have come to HCIN's Milwaukee-based studio to record seminars includes Lisa Selman-Holman, Melinda Gaboury, Linda Krulish, Stephen Tweed, John Gilliland and Michael Ferris. "We have produced more than 40 seminar modules from these speakers alone," Williams commented. "Our faculty has proposed nearly 300 unique seminars and we expect to release at least 15-20 events each month for the balance of the year. This is just the beginning."