Show and Tell for Professionals
Resume and Interview Tips for Success

If you take a trip back in time to your elementary school classroom days, you might remember show and tell. It was a much anticipated event. Many waited all week, after carefully selecting the perfect item, to showcase it to the rest of their classmates. However, imagine show and tell if you weren’t allowed to bring anything—if you had nothing to show. It wouldn’t have been quite so exciting.

On the flip side, imagine show and tell if you weren’t allowed to speak, and you simply had to stand up, hold the item above your head, and then sit down. Those classroom presentations might not have been as memorable either. Effective show and tell requires an individual to both show and tell.

The same principle applies to interviewing and resumes, which is essentially your chance to showcase your skills to employers. In interviews and on resumes, you want to remember to show and tell, not simply tell—a common pitfall of many applicants entering the job search.

For Interviews
Anyone can say they have all the stereotypical intangible skills: “I’m a hard working, problem solver. I’m independent and a team player. I’m organized, I pay attention to detail, I have the ability to multitask and I have excellent time management. I have excellent customer service and communication skills. I am friendly, positive, and a motivated self-starter. I adapt to change easily and learn new procedures quickly.”

Would you be impressed if someone told you that? Would you take their word for it and hire them on the spot? Not likely. You would first ask them to prove themselves and give examples. Rather than simply telling them, employers want you to show how you’ve demonstrated each of those skills as proof. Most of the time employers will ask you in an interview setting specifically for examples, but even when they do not ask for them, provide them. Carefully selecting and sharing examples with descriptive detail is a way to provide tangible evidence of your intangible skills to an employer.

For Resumes
Take a look at your resume. How many of those intangible skills are listed? How many of those have you included on your resume without examples and further description? Some of those skills are so common and overused, they are often overlooked.

Do we suggest removing all of them completely? No. They are great skills to have—skills that make you a valuable employee. If they are listed as desired qualities in a job posting, then they are even more valuable to include on your resume; however, you will want to incorporate them into your resume rather than just list them.
Ahira Smajic – Sioux Falls, SD
All I can say is that I was very pleased with the training I received and Career Step’s involvement with my job search. I would recommend Career Step’s training to anyone.

Crystal Jackson – Lesage, WV
In October, I was hired as an auditor for a fire and ambulance billing company that has been in business for 25 years. I took my certification for CAC (Certified Ambulance Coder) and passed. I am learning a lot. Career Step was very helpful during my course of training for medical coding and billing. They were available to answer my questions and were there every time I needed to vent a little when I would get overwhelmed during my training. I plan on taking my CPC in the spring, and I want to thank Career Step again for all they did for me and my new career.

Diana Melendez – Sugar Land, TX
I am so grateful to Career Step. They are awesome! The program helped me understand the ins and outs of the coding world. There are not enough words to explain how much I appreciate you guys.

Donna Vilagi – Charlotte, NC
It is so exciting to be embarking on a new career in medical coding and billing and to have graduated with honors! I must admit that the course was very challenging and demanding, but it was the Career Step training that helped me pass the CPC exam on my first attempt. Everyone at Career Step was very helpful; I asked for a lot of explanations and received very detailed answers, which really helped me understand the coding process.

Eliane Evers – Wahiawa, HI
My overall experience with Career Step was positive. As a military wife with two kids that I home school, I knew that regular schools would be difficult for me. Online school was my best option and I’m happy with my choice. I always had support from the staff which made my journey easy. I’d like to say a special thank you to Randy. Thank you for your help and kind emails.

Jessica Hartwell – Menifee, CA
As a graduate from Career Step, I must say that the program for medical coding and billing has taught me so much. Although I have not taken the CPC exam, I know I am ready.

Many of my friends went to an actual school to become a medical coder and biller and failed. Career Step’s modules are well planned, and I am happy that I was able to get through the course and graduate with honors. The school’s resources helped me out when I needed the help. I would highly recommend Career Step to those who want to pursue their education in the medical coding and billing industry.

Joseph Susuico – Winter Park, FL
It has been quite an experience. Online schooling is not for everyone. The support is there when you need it, you just need to ask and keep moving forward, so don’t give up. Read! Read! Read! The practical exercises are extremely helpful. Keep at it—redundancy is a good thing. You will eventually get it and know it. Good luck. Thank you Career Step.

Kathryn Robinson – Kemmerer, WY
I was very pleased with the lessons and the programming for helping me obtain my coding and billing certificate. I am now applying to take my test with the AAPC and feel confident that my experience with the lessons I have learned through this program will set me on a course for success.

Lolita Samanta – La Verne, CA
I was contemplating about coding and billing classes and where to go. Once I came to know that a prestigious school like the University of California Riverside was offering the Coding program through Career Step, I immediately went for it, and looking back I feel I made the right choice. The program was extensive and detailed, but very well-taught through unit tests and module exams. I always felt at ease with the content and language, and the best part was that I was able to get help immediately through emails or telephone calls if had any questions. I was not able to use the forums or chats, as I have a full time job and could not participate during the day, but there was help whenever you needed it. Even after graduation, they support you with advice for job interviews and how to prepare for them with an updated resume. I cannot complain about anything, and I will encourage more people to take this course if they want a career in coding through Career Step.

Mabel Velez – Chester, NY
Just wanted to thank everyone, especially Randy for taking the time to always answer questions and explain everything very clearly.

I also wanted to thank Jenae for helping me to prepare such a professional resume which allowed me to find a job at a health center as a call center representative. There are many opportunities here and I foresee working in their billing dept in the near future. Lastly, and most importantly, because of this course, I passed the CPC Exam! Taking this program has been a positive experience. I highly recommend it. The staff provides lots of support, they are extremely knowledgeable, and they are just a phone call away.

Margaret Lougue – Altoona, PA
The Career Step coding program is a very challenging program, especially the second half of the course. I had no medical experience and feel I learned more than enough to find a coding job in a hospital or doctors’ office. The staff at Career Step is extremely helpful with any problems or questions. The program is very user friendly. After I graduated I took the CCA exam and passed it on the first try. I am looking forward to finding a job and using all that I learned in the program.

Pamela Smith – Forest, MS
The support you get after graduation is very mind easing! The detail in which my questions were answered and the help that I received in composing different documents and ideas for job searching could have been overwhelming, but instead it was rewarding.

Patricia Bobbyn – Indian Trail, NC
I found the Career Step program to be excellent. The course content was very comprehensive, and the support I received during the course and after graduation was outstanding, which was extremely important.

Sharon Elgin – Henderson, NC
I recently sat for and passed my CPC certification exam through AAPC. Career Step prepared me for the certification in a most excellent manner. The course was very intense, and the content was very much in line with what is presented on the test material. I am glad I chose Career Step.
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First, limit yourself to about 2-3 intangible skills to include in the skills section of your resume. The majority of the skills you include in a listed format should be focused, tangible skills fine-tuned to the position for which you are applying. The skills listed under this section on your resume will be a few skills that you “tell.”

Next, you will want to “show” those and the rest of your skills in the second half of your resume. You can do this in your job descriptions by giving examples and details that illustrate these qualities without simply stating that you have those skills.

Consider the difference between listing “organization and time-management” in the skills section of your resume and the following in your job description: “Gathered patient information in a timely and efficient manner to ensure accurate billing and reimbursement. Effectively organized all patient records and established a system in order to make the retrieval process for doctors and other medical personnel more efficient. Used database software for easy access and filed reports.”

Consider the difference between listing “excellent customer service skills” in the skills section of your resume and the following in your job description: “Answered questions via phone and email to effectively explain billing, claims, and benefits while maintaining a high level of patient satisfaction. Greeted incoming patients and provided them with needed information in a timely manner.”

Consider the difference between listing “attention to detail” in the skills section of your resume and the following in your job description: “Followed up promptly when additional research was needed and documented information according to facility standards to maintain patient confidentiality and HIPAA compliance.”

Standing in front of your classmates and talking about an item that is meaningful to you might not sound as nerve-racking as it did when you were in elementary school, but sitting across the table from an employer or sending your resume and hoping to make a good first impression might be just as intimidating. In order to prepare most effectively for either situation, be sure to remember and put into practice the show and tell principle.

-Jenae Walker
CS Coding Support Team
Student in the Spotlight -
Therese Lakebrink

My name is Therese Lakebrink. After 13 years of Pharmaceutical/Specialty sales, sending my son off to college, and almost losing my dad in 2004, my life changed dramatically. I moved back home from Iowa to Missouri to be with my parents, and after five weeks by my dad’s bedside in the hospital 24/7, my mom and I were blessed to bring him home. In the following years, I spent my time as the primary caregiver for my father, running a fully licensed home-based chocolate business, and was blessed with the wonderful addition of my daughter-in-law. Needless to say, the past several years have been a crazy ride on the roller coaster of life!

Once full-time caregiving for my father was no longer necessary, I gave thought to a career change that would give me the opportunity to stay in a medical-related field, and still live close to family. Because Career Step is an online self-paced course, it affords me the opportunity to continue caregiving when needed while working toward my current goal of certification. I researched different schools and really liked the layout of the Career Step course. Learning the basics before moving onto the coding just makes sense!

Although challenging, Career Step provides an abundance of resources and tools that truly support the learning process. Whether it’s feedback I receive from using the E-mail This Page feature, job preparation, or speaking to someone live on the phone, Jenae, Randy, and Cari are always there to help. There are also many other built-in invaluable resources available at my fingertips, including Dorland’s Medical Dictionary, Elsevier’s Anatomy Plates, Clinical Pharmacology Drug Reference, Dictionary of Medical Acronyms and Abbreviations, The Merck Manual, and the list goes on. The Study Planner has also been a great tool to keep track of my progress in the course and make sure I’m within the time frame I would like to complete the course. I appreciate Career Step being with me daily throughout the online process. Career Step is interested in my progress in the course as well as my success in medical coding and billing.

I have just started ICD-9-CM, Block 1. Even with my medical background, I have been intimidated by the course more than once. I just take a deep breath and work through the problems one at a time. In earlier modules, it was helpful to make flashcards and take notes. Not only did I make flash cards for everything I could, but I also made quick study lists of the same information on notebook pages so I could hide one column and reveal answers from the other column as I went down the page. I love the quick study sheets when I don’t have as much time to flip cards.

Career Step has been a wonderful fit for me. I wish all of my fellow coders the very best this New Year!

- Therese Lakebrink

Med Gab

I read a medical thriller fiction book as I was learning the terminology in the program, and I found it was a great way to get the words I was seeing in the program to stick. I would read them in context, recognize them, and review them—all while doing something I love—reading. It felt like I was relaxing and studying at the same time!

We often hear comments like these from students that enroll in our program, and it’s a great suggestion if you love to read. If you prefer movies or television shows, there’s plenty to choose from as well. Medical TV shows have become an indelible part of pop culture, so in honor of them, we’ve included a Med Gab challenge that features current and classic TV favorites. Enjoy! Hint: It helps to read the phrase out loud and sometimes quickly to understand the hidden phrase. Good luck!

1. Dew Key House Her ___________________
2. Broil Pay Yawns ___________________
3. Mow Bull Are Me Sir Jiggle Oz Bit Tall ___________________
4. Call Lift Tux Tub Ball ___________________
5. Nor The Turn Next Pose Sure ___________________
6. Pry Vet Purr Act Us ___________________
7. Ye Are ___________________
8. Ducked Irk Win Mad is When Woo Men ___________________
9. Jen Near All Awe Spit Tall ___________________
10. Greek Gore Ye How Us ___________________
Graduate in the Spotlight - Debbie Phillips

My journey to become a medical coder/biller started in July of 2010. I was at a job that I wanted to leave badly, but the job market in my area, Iowa, was slim to none. My best friend and I started talking about what we would really like to be doing and some of the perks of a medical coding job. I wanted to make better money (obviously) and find a position that I would be able to do anywhere. My folks live outside of Houston, and I knew the day would come when I would want and need to be closer to them to possibly take care of them. To me, a remote coding job was ideal and something I could see myself doing. My friend and I looked into a lot of different courses, and I felt Career Step fit my needs the best. My friend chose another course. More on that later.

In August of 2010, I signed up with Career Step. The course was very challenging and since I had no experience in the medical field, at times it seemed I would never get through it. But with the encouragement of the staff, especially Jenae, Randy, and Cari, I kept plugging away. In late September I was let go from my job, a blessing in disguise, as I was able to study pretty much full time. Career Step has the course laid out so well, and it wasn’t long before I could see the light at the end of the tunnel. When I got to the practicum I felt like I was starting at the beginning, but again, with encouragement I got through and passed my final exam with high honors! I cannot tell you how wonderful that felt.

Before I got my results, I got a job at an urgent care office. Wow! I was amazed and pleased to get a job after the year I had spent studying and preparing. I was hired as a PSR (patient service representative), I have my foot in the door, and I am coding and billing for the urgent care. I am meeting the right people, and I’m confident that with the training I received from Career Step, the perfect coding position is coming soon. In September 2011, I took the National AAPC test and passed that with honors. I would like to say I received high honors on that also, but I’ll take honors any day, and now I am a certified CPC-A.

Now back to my friend. We took the national test together and sadly she was unable to pass after two attempts. She is scheduled to take it for the third time in December. She and I did some of our studying together and I vastly preferred Career Step’s method of teaching over her course. I think the results speak for themselves.

My goal is to become certified in a specialty, and as soon as I lose the apprentice status, I will look for a remote position and relocate to Texas. Sadly, my dad passed away a couple of weeks ago, but I pray I will have the chance to help my mom in the near future.

I can’t say enough how grateful I am for Career Step and all the help I got with this course, from the course itself, to the forums and chat rooms, and especially from the staff. Thank you all very much.

- Debbie Phillips, CPC-A

2011 Highlight: AHIMA Approval

Last year was a busy year for Career Step, but especially momentous for our Inpatient and Outpatient Medical Coding and Billing students. In 2011, Career Step’s Inpatient and Outpatient Medical Coding and Billing program was added to the list of medical coding education programs approved by American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA). As an AHIMA-Approved Coding Certificate Program, an independent peer review has determined that Career Step’s curriculum meets the organization’s model curriculum and standards.

“We’re very excited to have earned AHIMA approval,” said Career Step COO Mark Thomas, the executive over program development. “This approval certifies our Medical Coding and Billing program as one of the best in the industry and it is a testament to the fact that our educational program focuses on quality training and student outcomes.”

Career Step released the Inpatient and Outpatient Medical Coding and Billing program in 2009, and since that time, Career Step has trained thousands of students to prepare to pass national coding certification exams to become entry-level medical coding professionals. The support by experienced coders, the hands-on coding experience with authentic records, as well as the convenient online format allows students to move through their training seamlessly and prepare them well for the workplace.

AHIMA approval is only granted after an in-depth application and review process. This includes an independent, peer review analysis that evaluates program outcomes, faculty qualifications, and curriculum details. Programs on the approved list have been found to be compliant with the organization’s standards of excellence and to offer curriculum that matches AHIMA’s national model curriculum.

“With nearly 30 years of experience in healthcare, I have a great respect for AHIMA and the leadership role this organization plays within the industry. We appreciate the recognition this approval affords Career Step,” said Michael Wilstead, Career Step CEO.

We are excited to announce the approval of our program to our students and expect that it will continue to benefit current and future students that complete the coding training available through Career Step.

- CS Coding Support Team
Dear Cari...

The operative report I read has a statement of procedure of tonsillectomy. When I read the body of the operative report, it is specified that both of the patient’s tonsils were removed. But, the coding shows only a single code of 42825, Tonsillectomy, primary or secondary, younger than age 12. Since the procedure was performed bilaterally and the code description does not indicate a bilateral procedure, why is there not a -50 modifier appended to this code?

Thanks,
- Contemplating in Colorado

Dear Contemplating,

A tonsillectomy procedure code is not identified in the CPT book as reporting a bilateral procedure, and a -50 modifier is not appended to either code 42825 or code 42826, because both of these procedures are considered inherently bilateral.

Procedures found in the CPT book that are considered to be inherently bilateral, such as a tonsillectomy, are considered to be so because the vast majority of the time these procedures are performed bilaterally, making a bilateral tonsillectomy the common or normal method for performing this procedure. Remember that modifiers are used to signal circumstances surrounding the performance of a procedure that are the exception to the norm. If you append the -50 modifier when reporting the code for a tonsillectomy procedure, the modifier would have to be used more often than not, rather than being used only occasionally to identify those few circumstances when the procedure is performed outside of the norm.

Keep up the good work!

- Cari Greenwood, CCS, CPC
CS Student Support Team