

# flourish

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## 21st Century CDI Work: Retaining Your Staff and Growing Your Personal Brand in the New Gig Economy

**Justin Satterfield**

*Founder & CEO*

Norwood

Austin, Texas

**Brian Murphy**

*Branding Director*

Norwood

Austin, Texas

## Presented By



**Justin Satterfield** is the founder and CEO of Norwood, based in Austin, Texas, where he is dedicated to serving the CDI community through staffing, consulting, education, and advocacy. He fosters a culture that is conducive to hiring top-tier talent. He has presented at multiple ACDIS and AHIMA events and has been a guest on the *ACDIS Podcast*. He currently serves on the Texas ACDIS local chapter leadership team, the TxHIMA communications team, and the HIM advisory board at Texas Southern University.



**Brian Murphy** serves as the branding director for Norwood in Austin, Texas. Norwood provides staffing and consulting services for organizations and professionals throughout the mid-revenue cycle. Murphy is the former founder and longtime director of ACDIS, which he served from 2007 to 2022. In his current role, he is responsible for enhancing and elevating careers of mid-revenue cycle professionals through his writings and new podcast, *Off the Record*.

# Learning Outcomes

- At the completion of this educational activity, the learner will be able to:
  - Describe strategies to prevent staff attrition
  - Discuss ways to create a personal brand on LinkedIn and other platforms



## What Is 21<sup>st</sup> Century CDI Work?

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# It's ... FLOURISHING!

## But also, rapidly evolving and changing ...



### CDI SALARY SURVEY 2022

## CDI salaries on the rise, remote work offers greater flexibility

**S**ince ACDIS conducted its *first CDI Salary Survey*, respondents have incrementally reported higher annual salaries. Despite the continually tightening margins for healthcare organizations, the 2022 CDI Salary Survey results show that no ground has been lost for CDI compensation. In fact, the survey results show that the CDI industry has made marginal inroads toward the higher ends of compensation.

In *2021*, the largest portion of survey respondents (19.09%) reported making \$90,000–\$99,999 annually. In 2022, though that same bracket remained the largest portion of respondents, the percentage fell to 14.84%. This is not

per year) rose more than 12 percentage points in 2022, making up 53.68% of all respondents (versus 42.35% in 2021, 37.24% in *2020*, 32.99% in *2019*, and 28.15% in *2018*). The percentage of those in the lowest salary bracket—\$59,999 or less—remained nearly flat year-over-year (2.50% in 2022 versus 2.57% in 2021). (See Figure 1)

This year, nearly 800 CDI professionals took part in the survey. Although this report will not discuss every survey question in detail, readers can examine all the responses in table format beginning on p. 13.

### Salary growth and career opportunities

As in years past, 2022's survey results show continued job title diversification in the CDI field. In 2018, nearly 69% of respondents said they held the title of CDI specialist with record reviews as their primary role. By 2019, that percentage had dropped to 52.95%; by 2020, it was down again slightly to 51.38%; and in 2021, it fell to 47.37%. Now, the 2022 results show that percentage has dropped again to 39.11%. (See Figure 2.)

The next largest groups of 2022 survey respon-

supervisors (4.58%)—all titles that represent traditional "next step" opportunities for CDI professionals interested in leadership roles. The remaining 18.59% of respondents were divided among 18 other response options.

Offering additional career ladder rungs or specialized roles within the CDI department helps to keep staff excited about their careers. Plus, it

**"Show the value that your CDI team brings to the table. [...] You have to create that business plan and really tell that story to back up being able to build that career ladder."**

Anne Robertucci, MS, RHIA

allows for succession planning, preparing existing staff to step into a vacated role when a manager or director leaves or retires. Those who don't have a career ladder in place, however, should be prepared to build a compelling case to present to organizational leadership, since adding rungs will result in a new pay scale for a department based on the positions in the ladder.

According to **Anne Robertucci, MS, RHIA**, vice president of clinical revenue cycle at Prisma Health in Greenville, South Carolina, the first step is to tell the story of the department's impact on

# It's a Diverse Blend of Roles and Responsibilities

Unlike the early days where you were either a CDI specialist or supervisor:

- CDI specialist: 39% (compare to 2018; 69% held this title!)
  - CDI managers: 19%
  - CDI directors: 13%
  - Team lead: 6%
  - CDI supervisors: 5%
  - **Other: 18%**
- 
- Other (nearly one-fifth) includes wide range of job types including CDI auditor, educator, second-level reviewer, quality specialist, informaticist/analyst)

*Takeaways: Leaders needed, more than ever. And unique jobs are blossoming.*

Source: ACDIS, 2022 CDI Salary Survey

## More Diversity—Outpatient, and Denials

- About 25% of organizations currently review outpatient records, which is nearly flat with 2021
- Another 23.67%, however, say they plan to expand into outpatient in the near future
- Percentage of respondents involved in the denials or appeals process rose by nearly 10 percentage points to 67.91%.

*Takeaways: New skills needed to meet new demands. New roles are being created, added to career ladders.*

## It's Increasingly Well-paid

- \$80,000-\$89,999: 15%
- \$90,000-\$99,999: 15%
- \$100,000 or more: 54% (up from 42% in 2021, 33% in 2019; and 21% in 2018)
- People still getting paid more in the Pacific regions (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA—22% making \$160,000 or more) and Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT—16% making \$160,000 or more), but we expect this to even out
- **Effort and creativity being rewarded:** 44% who got a raise say it was merit/performance-based, e.g., taking on additional CDI related projects.
  - That's higher than those who got a cost-of-living raise (41%).

*Takeaways: Be prepared to pay for talent but you can't (just) compete on salary*

Source: ACDIS, 2022 Salary Survey



# It's Remote

## Pre-COVID-19:

- 13.43% were 100% remote, and 44.00% had a hybrid program with some remote options, leaving 42.57% fully on-site.
- 77.68% were fully remote during the pandemic and another 15.94% had a hybrid program with remote options.

## Post COVID-19:

- 26.91% of respondents are entirely remote with no on-site option
- 34.99% are completely remote but have an option to go on-site as needed/ desired; another 32.15% have a hybrid program of some sort
- Only 5.95% of respondents are fully on-site
- 84% say their productivity increased or stayed the same

*Takeaways: We're working remotely. A job satisfier, with employee engagement challenges ...*

Source: ACDIS, 2022 Industry Overview Survey

## It's a Middle-aged Profession ... Trending Toward Retiring

- 62%: 40-59 years old
- 17%: 60-69
- 20%: Under 40

*Takeaways: Replacing staff as they retire become a top priority, as is succession planning for leadership. Age shifts from 2021 (when 20% were 60 or older, and only 17% under 40) indicate this necessity.*

## It's Technology-driven and Tech Dependent

- Today everyone is using an encoder and most are using some sort of assistive CDI review tool
- 73% are using some type of chart prioritization!
- EPIC is taking over the world—seeing Epic Cadence, ClinDoc, on resumes and requirements
- 41% of respondents' organizations don't use NLP, and about 60% have not adopted CAPD—but these are coming.
  - Moore's Law states that the number of transistors on a microchip doubles every two years. So, we can expect the speed and capability of our computers to increase every two years, and we will pay less for them. And this growth is exponential.

*Takeaways: Technological proficiency is now the expected norm, and CDI job seekers asking about tools organizations use. Having the right tool can equal competitive advantage or disadvantage*

## It Will Be Increasingly Competitive

- 67% of bedside nurses plan to exit current role in 3 years
- They have to go somewhere, CDI might be it

Source: American Association of Critical Care Nurses:

<https://aacnjournals.org/ccnonline/article/42/5/58/31808/National-Nurse-Work-Environments-October-2021-A>



# Quitting Unfulfilling Jobs Is a High Priority Among Workers

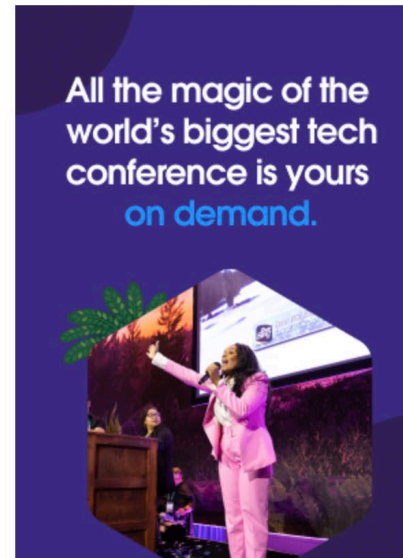
LAND THE JOB

## The 10 jobs people are most likely to quit in 2023, according to new research

Published Wed, Jan 4 2023•11:54 AM EST

 Morgan Smith  
@THEWORDSMITHM

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Nearly half (46%) of U.S. workers plan to look for a new job in the next six months, citing low pay as their No. 1 reason for eyeing greener pastures.

**No. 6 on the list:**  
**Medical coding (53%)**

**Source:** CNBC, citing HR firm survey of 2,500 professionals

# Why Are Professionals Leaving the CDI Profession?

Largest percentage (45%) say they entered CDI because they wanted to grow professionally, and CDI offered me the chance to do so. So, why do they leave or plan to leave?

1. General burnout (52.19%)
  2. Required overtime (51.43%)
  3. Lack of remote work opportunities (51.34%)
- When asked what would make them leave their specific position, respondents said management failure (91.27%), lack of raises/low compensation (90.45%), inadequate staffing (89.18%), and lack of advancement (87%)

*Takeaways: Burnout prevention should be your foremost priority, which can be accomplished with professional growth opportunities, adequate staffing and ability to work remotely/set own hours. Listen to your people. People are still leaving managers, not jobs, organizations. Let's up our leadership and management game!*

Source: ACDIS, 2022 Industry Overview Survey

## Let's Sum Up. CDI in 2023 Is ...

- Diverse
- Increasingly well-paid
- Remote
- Tech heavy
- In flux: Older/exiting staff, some unhappy/burned out/contemplating quitting. Younger CDI professionals coming in; new bedside nurses entering the CDI field.

*Takeaway 1: It's a good time to be a CDI professional: Never easier to exit your organization and pursue new opportunities*

*Takeaway 2: It's a tougher time to be a manager, director, or HR department in this environment*



## Attracting, Hiring, and Retaining CDI Candidates

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# Developing a Winning Strategy

In today's environment you have two levers to pull in the mid-revenue cycle U.S. market: Train or recruit. Above all, retention is how you win.

## Train

- New graduates
- Cross functional
- Upskilling
- Dedicated educators
- Development program

## Recruit

- Candidate experience
- Job descriptions
- Interview process
- Time kills
- Psychology 3.0

## Retain

- Employee experience
- Onboarding
- Continuous conversations
- Stay interviews
- EVP

# Recruiting Starts With the Right Salary

- CDI is about patient care, but we need to talk about financial impact more openly
- Can't provide quality care if you can't keep the lights on
- Don't be penny wise, pound-foolish
  - Paying more \$ for contract labor that is tenured talent could be net seven-figure gain in organizational ROI

## The Salary Reality

- Most contractors are making \$50-\$60/hr (\$104-\$125k annually). Some below, some above
- We think common ground in the future will be salary between \$85-\$110K, with \$85K being little to no experience.
- To attract and retain experienced talent, expect to pay \$95-\$105K

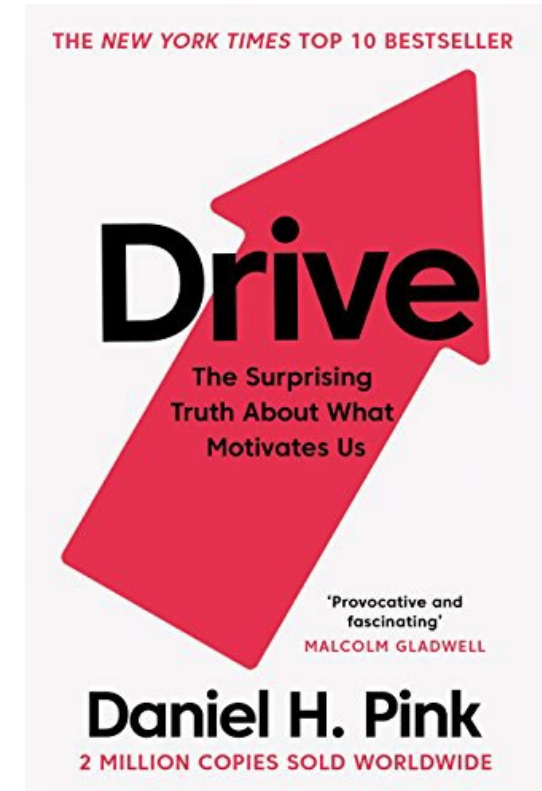
# National Salary Rates Will Be Coming

- National market rate in CDI will be inevitable, given remote work
  - Some CDI making \$34/hr, and some making \$65/hr—range of \$70-\$135K is unnatural for a national marketplace
  - Variation is due to local market analysis through salary and cost of living. But local market analysis = irrelevant in national marketplace.
  - Sourcing locally, still competing nationally. Local market analysis might say an IP coder makes \$27/hr, but you are competing with hospitals in Manhattan, Boston, and the Bay area



## But ... Money Only Goes So Far

- *Drive* by Daniel Pink describes psychology 3.0
  - Psychology 2.0 describes the exchange of money for time and expectation, with more \$ = higher performance
  - But, if people get paid what they deem fair or above fair, impact more \$ is minimal at best
- What do people really want?
  - Fulfillment and purpose
  - How do you demonstrate you can provide these?



# Candidates Attracted to You, Not Your Organization

- Sell yourself, not your organization (remember: remote work = employee not in the hospital)
- Your reputation matters, your brand matters. That is your responsibility, not the hospitals'.
  - Hospital may have a good or even great name, but the department will encompass 99% of your team's experience with the organization
- Great CDI programs have great culture, thought leadership, executive buy-in, provider relationships, workflow and coworker relationships, flexibility, and visibility

# Sell Yourself ... Then the Hospital, Then the Job

- People want to work with people they like and feel a connection with
  - Establish a human relationship in your interview (most important)
- Once they've reached late interview stage, they're likely qualified. So branch out to the personal. Great interview questions include:
  - What's your story?
  - I'm curious about who you are as a person, so tell me:
    - What are your values, perspectives, and philosophies?
    - Where did you grow up?
    - Who do you admire?
- Sell your hospital by demonstrating your organization's passion for patient care and progress—that's purpose.
- Selling the job comes last!

# How Do You Market Your Brand?

- Participate in your CDI community
  - Present at ACDIS locally and nationally, contribute on boards and committees
  - CDI community is small and your reputation as a leader matters
  - Being well networked matters—people will want to be part of it
- Make sure your job descriptions clearly state staff can work remote, even if after a trial period or partial remote
- Define your tangibles and intangibles, and add to the job description
- Requirements and preferences—Less is more
  - Have as few requirements as possible and go heavier on preferences
- Seriously consider candidates with no experience
  - We have a responsibility to train talent in this growing industry, with high retirement
  - Be more selective; cast a wider net and get more people into your funnel



# Recruiting the 21<sup>st</sup> Century CDI Candidate

- From the time of application to the first day, every touch point matters
  - How quickly are candidates' resumes reviewed? How long before they are scheduled for an interview?
  - It should be same day optimally, three days at the latest
  - Don't judge a book by its cover (rockstars can misspell HIPAA)
  - Job hopping more common these days, and everyone has a story

# Tighten Up Your Interview Timeline

- Interviews are absolutely critical, but no one goes through formal interview training (not even me)
  - What is your interview process—leader, panel, HR?
  - Move quickly. If multiple interviews, schedule same day or next two days. If you can't, slim down your process
- In staffing, “time kills all deals,” especially in today’s candidate market
  - Each day provides more variables, including competitor opportunity. If someone is interviewing with you they will interview elsewhere, and compare offers
  - Don’t fall into the trap of waiting: “We have a great program and they should want to work here”—there are MANY great programs out there

# Additional Interview Tips, Strategies

- Have a couple hard questions in your back pocket
  - A study of 100,000 interviews demonstrated a higher acceptance rate for interviews with challenging elements.
  - From the study, “Great talent sees skills and career development as a priority. Interviews are an opportunity for them to see if the company they’re applying for will equip them with the experience they want.”
- Voice concise encouragement
  - Phrases like “yes,” and “that’s right” are music to a talker’s ears. Sprinkle them in and then get out of the way!
- Utilize three magic words
  - After listening, parrot back the most important three words they said to show understanding
- Ditch the phone: Do virtual!

## Wrap Up the Offer By Being Forward

- Get out the offer as quickly as possible
- Call them before their friends congratulate them
  - Tell them you're excited to start working with them
  - Provide details on what to expect in their first week
- This puts them at ease that they made the right decision, and prevents “ghosting.”

# You've Hired a Candidate ... How Do You Retain Them?

- With a great employee experience
- What does the journey look like for new hires?
- They subconsciously decide whether they made the right decision in the first week, the first day, and even first 36 minutes according to one study.
  - The first day is critical—make sure it starts off strong and that makes other barriers easier to get through because they are bought in.
- Personal and work life are the same.

## More Retention Strategies

- Listen to your staff
  - Best leaders are available, flexible, and supportive
- Remote staff? Turn on your cameras when you meet
- Implement virtual drop-in office hours
  - Set time to pop in and talk about anything
- Invest in personal development—your staff, and your own

*Source: ACDIS 2022 Mastermind Hot Topic Guide*

- Engage in continuous conversation – use the Janus Grid



## Growing Your Brand: Strategies to Flourish in 2023 and Beyond

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# What Is a Personal Brand?

**Your personal brand is what you are known for, and in today's world that's primarily online.** It is the impression others form when they think of you. It includes a blend of interactions, experiences, prior knowledge, public opinion, personality and reputation that are associated with your name.

**– Reputation X, “What is Personal Branding?”**

*Source: [blog.reputationx.com/whats-personal-branding](http://blog.reputationx.com/whats-personal-branding)*

# Why Do I Need to Develop My Personal Brand?

- A huge differentiator: Resumes and Indeed are yesterday's news
  - People look you up online
- Distinguishes you in a crowded job seeking market
  - AI can scan resumes, but you're the only you
- Leaders: Job seekers will come to you looking for opportunities
- Reinvigorates your career
- Lack of thought leadership in CDI and coding markets = opportunity!

# How Many People Actually Post on LinkedIn?

- LinkedIn has:
  - More than 870 million members
  - More than 58 million registered companies
- How do you stand out...? By posting content
  - Only around 3 million users share content on a weekly basis. This means that only about 1% of LinkedIn's 260 million monthly users share posts
  - Those 3 million or so users net the 9 billion impressions (*kinsta.com*)

*What can it do for you? Let's look at three examples*

# Real-World Example 1: Robert Oubre



- “CDI guru of MedTwitter”
- 24,200 followers (as of Jan. 2023)
- Top Tweets exceed 750K views
- Spun out:
  - Email newsletter (new, more than 1200 subs)
  - Website: [www.robertoubremd.com](http://www.robertoubremd.com)
  - Sponsorships
  - Digital courses

*“CDI guru of MedTwitter”: I write on documentation, self-development, and burnout prevention.  
Husband/Dad/Hospitalist/CDI Medical Director*

## Real-World Example 2: Contempo Coding



*Youtube star, AAPC officer, and presenter,  
editorial board BC Advantage magazine*

**Aka., Victoria Moll**

- MASSIVE YouTube presence, in 2 years!
  - 93,000 subscribers
  - Monetized videos
  - Top videos have over 200K views (“What is a medical coder”)
- Spun out:
  - Paid courses
  - Merchandise
  - Multiple speaking engagements

## Real-World Example 3: Brian Murphy



*Handsome Norwood Branding Director.  
Self-proclaimed expert of all things*

- Leveraged a new job
- Growing our business
- LinkedIn
  - Followers: 3252 on 3/28/22; 4600 on 1/17/23 (42% growth in less than 10 months)
  - Impressions: Average more than 12K weekly
- *Off the Record* podcast: 1500 listens
- Cited in news stories, asked to write for Libman
- Speaking engagements



# Getting Started—finding Your Platform

- Find your platform
  - Facebook/Instagram
  - Twitter
  - YouTube
  - LinkedIn (best option IMO)
    - Text, images, short videos on your phone, and great network
  - Others: Tik Tok (?) Podcasting
- Considerations: Time, talent-bent, preference, commercial ambitions/side hustle.



# Getting Started—Best Practices and Suggestions

- Start conservative
  - Aim for long-term regularity over short-term fire-hose. You can always build
- Be patient
  - Growth takes time, effort,
- Engage with others
  - And they will reciprocate
- Be positive
  - Buck the trend, drop the negativity, give light, not heat. Maybe a little heat
- Be authentic, fearless
  - You've got a lot to say, and one life to do it in

## Answering the Objections

I'm not tech savvy!

- Neither am I
- Barriers to adoption lower and cheaper than ever; Fiverr is your friend, and many free courses

I have nothing to say!

- Think of every diagnosis your physicians struggle with
- See me after the session lets out

I don't have the time!

- We prioritize what we value
- You can write a LinkedIn post in 15 minutes

## More Reasons to Get Started

- Best way to learn is to teach/write/speak
- Bonus: Not just selfish. Positive organizational impact
  - Develop platforms, tech familiarity that you can use to educate your teams, physicians, hospital administration
- Network effect
  - You will find yourself on others' podcasts, invited to write, invited to speak
- Become a mentor, and champion of your profession
  - Stronger, more engaged, more interesting mid-revenue cycle industry benefits all
- **Note: If in doubt, check with your employer**

# The Mentorship Mindset

- At some point our life goals change, from growing our careers to growing others'
  - Paradoxically, mentoring others through generously giving of you and your time, has the net effect of growing your career, and growing and retaining your employees

*“If you want to promote somebody, or you want to grow somebody, the best thing you can do for that person is encourage them to take those leaps.”*

*– Susan Fantin, VP Integrated Care Management, McLaren Health*

*“You can do more than you think you can, and she put me in situations where I was uncomfortable. That’s what growth is, it’s uncomfortable. I don’t know if I would be sitting here if it weren’t for her encouragement.”*

*– Robin Jones, Executive Director of Clinical Excellence, AdventHealth*

## Get Comfortable With Change, Growth: Final Takeaways

- CDI job seekers: This is a time for OPTIMISM: Lots of non-traditional options for careers
- CDI Managers: This is a time for OPTIMISM: Opportunity to distinguish yourself from competitors, form closer bonds to staff, and grow you and your leadership
- Never more options to get involved
- Keep your sanity—we need you
- Listen, learn, be authentic, pursue your passions

*Do this, and you will FLOURISH (despite the obstacles)!*



## Thank you. Questions?

*[justin@norwood.com](mailto:justin@norwood.com)*

*[brian.murphy@norwood.com](mailto:brian.murphy@norwood.com)*

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