



# INTERVIEW

## CereCore Director

### An Inside Look into IT Support from our Support Services Director

*Our Director of Support Services, Rhonda Mech, took a few moments to sit down and answer some questions about what it's like to run a support services team and drive quality in an ever-changing and challenging area of the industry.*

#### > THE INTERVIEW

#### **What were you doing before you got involved in the IT support side of healthcare and what made you decide to switch career paths?**

After 25 years of providing and managing inpatient care as a nurse, the spectrum of my clinical skills and experiences unexpectedly paved a connection into HCAs IT&S organization. As a long-time advocate of the electronic revolution in healthcare, and an avid hospital super-user throughout my nursing career, I accepted the position as a manager for the IT&S clinical applications client support team. My motivation for this change stemmed from hope that my understanding of clinical workflows and patient care scenarios would promote quality within the customer experience. Admittedly, I was very uncertain if this role would be compatible and fulfilling, but was convicted to try for the sake of the clinician communities I represented. The frustrations in technology adoption was evident in most clinical environments I've worked in, thus I considered this career switch to be my opportunity to make a difference for those clinicians communities that had invested in my professional development. Eight years later, I think my choice has worked out pretty well.

#### **What skills and knowledge did you bring to the IT support side that you feel makes an everyday impact?**

Understanding of clinical and revenue workflows, plus vital critical care protocols, are where I have made the most impact within healthcare IT support. While outwardly these aspects may seem separate from IT support, best outcomes for most urgent scenarios are completely dependent on IT integrity. For example, there is a 90-minute window to rule-in/rule-out a possible stroke diagnosis and deliver the appropriate treatment protocol for best chances of survival or resulting quality of life, if radiology images are not crossing properly, the failure in IT processes could determine life or death for a stroke victim. Timely sharing of this essential knowledge is influential to the prioritization, level of involvement and rate of issue recovery.

## What are your goals in your current role?

To leave it better than I found it! My approach is to:

- Provide education to promote others' awareness and appreciation of Level 1 support. The initial point of contact so often seems under appreciated and mistakenly considered an entry-level position within the larger IT organization. Just as in a hospital emergency room, first impressions, initial triage, prioritization of needs, early diagnosis, and accurate routing significantly impacts outcomes including rate of recovery and customer satisfaction. L1 support is a very important aspect in the incident life cycle for IT disruptions & recovery.
- Strategized efforts aimed to help IT team members to recognize CereCore's business integrity relies on clients' perceived quality of experience and evidences that we are intentional about supporting the technologies we provide. While fix agents might favor build and design of new applications or processes, end-users confidence and satisfaction is determined by swift and reliable recovery of issues that impact their immediate work flows. We prove our respect and empathy for end-users through responsiveness and collaborative participation so they can perform their duties using the tools they need. In our case, the quality of patient care is often aligned with the availability of functional electronic equipment and software applications.

## What guiding principles do you use when managing such a large team?

Foremost the Golden Rule trumps all other management principles. The most important guiding principles thereafter are centered on:

- Assurance every team member's unique talents and strengths are recognized and valued.
- Confirmation that everyone has a clear understanding of their role/job expectations.
- Continual reinforcement that we work for hospitals and the significant difference we can make for those involved in caring for patients is a privileged position.

## What do you feel sets our support organization apart from others?

With the support of such a successful and large parent company, along with defined job expectations aligned to achieve quick recovery of IT disruptions respectful of contracted SLAs, our organization has become set apart with a reputation for excellence in support services within the healthcare IT industry.

## What do you value most about your job?

Above all else, I love serving others. I have the incredible privilege of serving almost 50 people including analysts, managers, advisors, and trainers and am in constant awe of their talents and self-less good-will towards others.

## What are some challenges you face or have faced? And how do you overcome them?

Formation of CereCore's L1 Client Support operations occurred at an incredibly opportune time in the healthcare IT market place. As so many healthcare C-suites arrived at realization that recruitment and retention of highly talented IT professionals willing to embrace client support is beyond challenging, both administratively and financially. CereCore support has defied the help desk industry's average attrition rate of 40% with achievement of a 4% attrition rate during its first three years. Thus the greatest challenge for our team is also one of the greatest thrills of the team: ongoing recruitment and training of quality professionals due to exponential growth. In three years, the team size and revenue has increased by 800%. Maintaining an interactive work environment in which each person is known and loved must be top-of-mind daily. The careful candidate selection process has been a key part of addressing growth challenges and our management team has become masterful at quickly identifying smart-creative talent. The work histories and skills among the L1 team compose a very diverse spectrum that contributes tremendously to our team's successes and content culture. No longer do we seek specific IT certifications or past clinical experience, but we look for overall great "DNA" including proven work ethics, ambitious drive, plus willingness and desire to serve others in meaningful capacities.

## What are some examples of when you and your team have made an impact on the quality of care providers give?

Some of my favorite example types that reinforce the quality of service and partnership we provide are as follows:

- Requests from stakeholders at client locations to notify their leadership contacts directly with details about critical incidents "because they really respect your opinion".
- Education of patients with limited experienced in computer use, technological terms, and/or work flows struggling with maneuvering within patient portal sites. Their delight and appreciation for someone to teach them how to use and manage their healthcare information and results online is profuse.
- Live assistance with end-users during intra-operative procedures to restore functionality of an IT tool essential to the patient's quality of outcomes. The beeping of monitors or a newborn's first cry during these scenarios diminishes any degree of separation between us and the hospital room.

## How would you describe your work ethic and approach to the job every day?

Every day is a new day. In serving others, I try to have a short memory and don't dwell on yesterday's events. I pray every day for grace and to be more interested in the success of others than myself. I have discovered that my happiest moments and greatest accomplishments are the results of an outward mindset and healthy working relationships.

## What motivates you to improve and continue moving forward in your role?

I'd like to be active and influential in the development of others until I am 100 years old thus I believe I have a lot of time ahead for do-overs and betterment! I believe I am prepared for any path no matter how unfamiliar it might be so I generally welcome change and delight in new challenges. I openly confess to others every day what I don't know and work hard to learn something new.



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