



***Independent Medical Coding —
The Comprehensive Guidebook
for Career Success as a Medical Coder,
Second Edition***

By Donna Avila-Weil, RHIT,
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What's in a name? In this case, everything. Even the cover photo gives some insight to this book. Imagine an island cottage complete with palm trees, safely elevated on sturdy pilings over a stormy sea. Whether dusk or dawn is tough to tell, but a full moon fills the background, and a warm golden glow of light fills the cottage. What a **great introduction to entrepreneurship as a medical coder.** There are hazards to avoid and obstacles to overcome, like the tempestuous waves and wind in the painting. But what a place to be—in control of your own personal world, warm and ready against the elements.

For those who have seriously considered going solo in a coding career and are at the cusp between dreaming and doing, **this book is an excellent place to start your research.** At first glance, one may think this is another book about how to be a coder. It isn't. Personally, I thought to sit down and read it cover to cover. OK, that's not what it is either. I had a false start or two when I'd finish a section and read through the next dozen or so pages.

I thought perhaps I had accidentally gone back to reread sections twice. Once I figured out that I wasn't having flashbacks, the reason for my puzzlement became clear.

You will find the same basic issues in more than one chapter. Credential review is on page 37 as well as page 53. The "coding toolbox" from page 35 somewhat repeats itself on page 49. Resources and references quoted in one section show up in more places and are grouped again in a comprehensive chapter at the end of book. It wasn't what I had initially expected, but it works.

This isn't a novel; it's a guidebook just like the name says. It's certainly comprehensive—you will find issues literally from A (abuse and automobile expenses) to Z (zoning. There's only one Z, but it did get covered). Career success is the authors' total focus, and they have gleaned hundreds of topics from their combined 54 years of experience in medical coding and related businesses. The independent coder may not need to know all the subjects reviewed here but would still be well-advised to know about and revisit them as needed.

The table of contents outlines information that covers topics from wanting to be a coder to handling business finances and contracts. Included in the chapters are information on major concerns, paragraphs of **excellent advice** on side issues, and **nuggets of coding and business savvy.** To avoid making this a 10-pound toe-crusher instead of the handy and comprehensive guidebook it is intended to be, scores of references and resources are provided should a reader need more information on a particular subject.

You will find reviews and recommendations for different types of credentials and coding systems. The authors explore options from types of services to types of clients. Do you have what you need in the way of technology? Have you thought about how to insure yourself against different kinds of financial liability? Do you have the extensive knowledge of HIPAA confidentiality laws to work with the protected health information housed by

your prospective clients? What do you know about business associate agreements and online information security? Have you thought about a realistic salary projection, and what does—or doesn't—count as a legitimate business expense?

Providing continuing value are the appendices of sample business forms and contracts, the glossary, and the **references and resources that are likely to be worth the cost of the book on their own merits.**

Don't balk at the price of this book if you are seriously considering independent coding as a business. You can certainly get the latest Stephen King or John Grisham novel for less if you just want something to read, but they won't be of much use with navigating the electronic medical record of your new client or keeping up with code changes for the various nosological systems. Even if you are already working as a contract coder or are securely established in the coding consulting business, you can still **use this book for assistance in overcoming obstacles that will certainly appear in your career path.**

Perhaps a final warning is in order: This is not a book that will teach the reader to code. Expect to achieve coding education and experience on your own. On the other hand, it will help you decide if you have the personality and interests to be a medical coder. If you are attracted by the **accurate description and excellent list of advantages to a coding career,** and if you are not discouraged by the **honest outline of concerns and issues that you must be prepared to handle,** you will find this volume useful in preparing an independent professional path. Once you have a coding background and have landed the credential of your choice, **you'll be able to use chapter after chapter of *Independent Medical Coding* both at the beginning of your venture and for years to come.**

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