

# Spotlight Profile: Kenneth W. Dion

By Amanda LeBlanc



**Kenneth Dion, MSN, MBA, RN**, is a past NSNA secretary-treasurer (1990-1991) and currently serves as treasurer of the Foundation of NSNA. He is a doctoral candidate at the University of Texas at Austin and president and CEO of Decision Critical.

[www.decisioncritical.com](http://www.decisioncritical.com)

## Uniting Information Technology with Nursing

Growing up, Ken Dion watched his father, grandfather and two uncles work as firefighters. Surrounded by the additional positive influence of his mother (a nurse who continues to practice as a home health nurse and a legal nurse consultant), his eventual information technology and nursing career paths were shaped while he was young. Ken would end up following both directions that he witnessed his family members pursuing. When considering this with his love for technology (beginning with a Boy Scout computer merit badge long before the hard drive existed) it becomes apparent that his success as a healthcare technology entrepreneur was a natural progression.

For years he served as a firefighter and paramedic before looking for a more fixed schedule, hoping to expand his career without losing the valuable skills acquired as an emergency worker. He opted to follow his mother's example and enter nursing school. After working in a medical-surgical unit, a step-down unit, and emergency department, Ken could

no longer ignore his love of technology and his penchant for business. Mentors urged him to hone both his nursing skills and business expertise by pursuing a joint MSN/MBA degree. While still working in the emergency department, he enrolled in a dual nursing and business administration program at the University of Texas in Austin.

After initially planning to enter healthcare administration, he changed directions when a new opportunity presented itself. An internship with a Houston-based healthcare technology consulting firm turned into a full-time job and provided him with valuable experience in many different aspects of healthcare. It also gave him the opportunity to work within the technology field that inspired him. He found that his well-rounded skills served him well as a consultant. He married nursing, informatics, and business skills to help organizations select, implement and optimize technology solutions. Ken likes to say that he is trilingual: he talks with nurses to identify their



needs; he communicates those needs to the technical staff; and then he wears his business hat, explaining the business benefits to the Chief Financial Officer.

As a consultant, he identified healthcare issues not currently addressed by other market-place solutions—technology or otherwise. Ken’s technology passion always steered him in the direction of those opportunities that stood to benefit from a technology solution. For example, healthcare providers were capturing information about patients in an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) but they were not capturing similar data about the professionals delivering care to those patients. He formulated a solution by applying his understanding of the EMR’s framework to the opportunity to develop, promote and maintain a culture of professional competency

in healthcare organizations.

Today, Ken is the Founder and CEO of Decision Critical, Inc., an organization based in Austin, Texas that helps healthcare organizations improve patient outcomes by driving education and training, and ensuring staff competency and compliance. Decision Critical delivers web-based “360° competency management” solutions that include learning management systems, competency check lists, professional portfolios and professional evaluation solutions.

Interaction with nurses has been consistent over the course of his varied and rich career. He finds many nurses that have great ideas but never follow through with them. Frequently, someone else has capitalized on the same idea only a short time later. His advice? Get out there and don’t be afraid to take credit for your own work. If you’ve got an idea—pursue it.

Nurses are on the front lines and see healthcare needs firsthand.

Today Ken’s ambitions are simple: to run a genuine, well-respected company that provides innovative products, which ultimately improve patient care. He wants to give back to the nursing community that has given so richly to him, and some day, he wants to be remembered as, “The guy who never said he wished he had.” ©



**Amanda LeBlanc,**

Director of Marketing at Decision Critical, Inc., has over 16 years in healthcare and technology marketing and communications experience. Her experience includes corporate communications, public relations, branding and positioning, sales tool development and support, market research, event planning and promotional materials.