



How IT can help forge successful healthcare alliances

Sooner or later, your organization is likely to form an alliance with another healthcare organization as a way to help you maximize payments under new reimbursement models, and improve accountability. The right alliance also can help you meet requirements from payers and patients for delivering quality, affordable care that improves the health of the community. Given the central role that technology plays in today's health care environment, you should carefully consider the IT implications of any new alliance before committing to the partnership.

Here are four IT considerations that can help ensure more successful clinical partnerships.

1

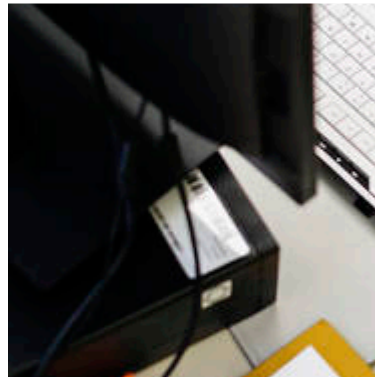
Put a premium on sharing

A recent survey showed that **88% of healthcare executives** expected to pursue some kind of merger or acquisition in the near future. You have to assume that many of the organizations with which you might want to join forces will have different technologies that need to work together. You can now adopt technology integration platforms that make the connections nearly seamless, which can streamline and simplify information sharing—either on premise or in the cloud.

2

Insist on interoperability

Some vendors push the concept of an end-to-end, single-vendor solution for electronic health or medical records, an approach that suits the interests of those vendors, but is not likely to benefit your patients or your organization. Most organizations have adopted EHR or EMR technology already, so forcing everyone to change technologies for the sake of uniformity only creates more disruption. Besides, it's likely that organizations will evolve through several different types of alliances before settling on a permanent structure. It's unrealistic to expect organizations to re-implement clinical systems every time a new partner comes aboard. Lack of interoperability is currently one of the leading obstacles preventing integration in Accountable Care Organizations (ACO). According to a study published by the [Healthcare Financial Management Association](#), 88% of ACOs reported difficulty with integrating data from disparate sources; 83% had problems integrating technology analytics into their workflows. Independent integration technologies and health information exchanges (HIE) already make it possible to exchange patient data between different EHR and EMR systems in a secure manner. And remember, integration and interoperability are not the same thing—you need integration to allow information sharing, but a modern interoperability platform allows that information to be meaningfully used in different clinical systems.



3

Make analytics central

In order to make effective use of the information you are exchanging through your clinical systems, you need analytics to convert raw data into information that includes meaning and context to help managers make more informed decisions. New payer-driven quality care initiatives require substantiation that can only be achieved with extensive analysis drawn on the widest possible array of patient data. Also, it can be difficult to extract reliable decision-making data from disparate, unconnected systems. In a common scenario, an executive director needs to report to the CEO on supplies used in the course of a month and hires an analyst to compile the report. At the same time, the finance department pulls its own report. After that, the procurement people pull yet another report. At the end of it all, the CEO has three inconsistent reports, and no idea which one is accurate, and no one can prove the validity of any of the data. When you put analytics at the center of your technology platform, rather than relying on analytics from systems on the edge of your network (such as EMRs and EHRs), you get information that's more useful for making key decisions and helps prove that you're delivering successful outcomes.



Stay flexible

In the end, the goal of creating a healthcare alliance is to improve the health of the community, and to make all partners in the alliance more successful. That means that the combined organization needs the agility to address the unique requirements of each member, while also supporting the goals of the alliance. Between demands for more accountability, more specific benchmarks for quality of business processes, and revamped payment methods and formulas, it simply won't be possible for any healthcare provider to continue functioning the same way five years from now as it did five years ago. Pressure to adopt value-based reimbursement will only intensify the need for alliances that give you the control you need to deliver successful outcomes across large patient populations, while driving down costs. You'll need an adaptable technology platform that makes it easy to enter alliances and to make those alliances successful.

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INF-1469187-en-US-0615-1