

Interoperability:

A fundamental necessity for adapting to healthcare's next generation

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With the quick and constant evolution of healthcare, interoperability is no longer primarily in the IT domain. Today, leaders throughout a given enterprise must embrace interoperability as essential to ensuring continued viability.

These leaders are recognizing interoperability's unique ability to provide faster, more comprehensive service to their key medical imaging constituencies, including physicians, payers and patients, while reducing costs and improving throughput.

But what exactly does this mean?

This unadulterated data movement is demanded by physicians, who have both revenue and quality considerations, supported by cost control-minded payers and increasingly expected by patients, who are assuming more control of their healthcare decisions.

With interoperability an inevitable development, there are protocols that can be established now to prepare for the day when it will be expected.

"First, these enterprises have to start embracing the new realities in healthcare. This is a sea change and they have to adapt to the new order or risk becoming obsolete," said John MacFarlane, CEO of Compressus, a leader in interoperability development and implementation.

"The change is being driven in part by legislators and in part by patients as consumer-driven healthcare takes center stage. Today, patients expect to get the best healthcare wherever they go and be able to share the information between those disparate entities. Healthcare is moving out of its cottage industry model."

The evolving healthcare models include scenarios that were previously unimaginable, including the quantum leap in the virtualization of patient care and data processing.

"Services that were once the domain of the hospital are no longer in the hospital," said MacFarlane. "Cardiology, pathology and other key services are now also found externally from sources that have already learned how to thrive in this new information-driven environment. To maintain their viability, hospitals, for example, will need to determine how to link to all these options that are now outside their realm. That's where interoperability plays a vital role."

While grappling with the service, revenue and cost-control issues, these enterprises also face the ongoing challenge presented by formidable competition. Today, there are fewer medical imaging resources dominating a given market, which has led to a healthy self-examination of all processes.

"In a way, hospitals have lost control of where they should have been," said Janine Broda, Compressus' Chief Marketing Officer. "To rebound, they now need to be at the core of interoperability development and duplicate the vision of the entrepreneurial-minded physician groups in their communities."

"Hospitals should be looking to interoperability to create stronger bonds to the referral community, said MacFarlane. "It is good policy and good policy is good business."

Typically, the questions related to interoperability have been relegated to the CIO or the head of IT. Both MacFarlane and Broda, however, see a broader adaptation as an essential part of enterprise growth.

"Interoperability impacts everyone in their areas of responsibility so the decision-making process should include the CEO, CIO, CFO and COO, to name a few," said Broda.

"Leaders should look at interoperability as part of their strategic direction and it has to be at the core of their business plans," added MacFarlane.

"Healthcare is changing – that is a fact. The people, facilities and technology up and down the spectrum are being asked to be more efficient, more effective and certainly more available. Interoperability is at the core of that change. The health care providers who survive and thrive and act as change agents during this period will be the ones who are the earliest to embrace the inevitability of interoperability."

About MEDxConnect

MEDxConnect offers a holistic solution to connecting disparate systems. Designed to manage the workflow of an imaging health care enterprise, the MEDxConnect system provides a suite of offerings that has the power to connect systems from multiple vendors, that offers proven interoperability, and that allows an organization with disparate multivendor systems to function as one virtual enterprise.

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