



The demands on the healthcare CIO have evolved over the past decade, but since the HITECH Act, they have exploded. As the healthcare industry strives to deliver high quality and affordable care, the following are generally the...

Top Ten Qualities of Healthcare CIOs that still Get it Done.

An Executive Search Perspective

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10. Mitigate Risk

The most basic level of the IT organization is a sound infrastructure. If you are struggling with keeping systems running, you are likely not deploying innovative technologies. In addition to maintenance, information systems need to be safeguarded against external issues, such as natural and manmade disasters and, increasingly, data breaches. CIOs must be savvy in working through policy, procedure and technology to address disaster recovery, continuity planning, and data breach processes. According to the PricewaterhouseCoopers 2011 report, the risk of data breaches increased with the widespread adoption of EHRs (even though protection around PHI has increased). Inadequate planning and inadequate infrastructure can cost the system millions of dollars and possibly a few careers. Every CIO needs to get this one right.

9. Understand and Manage Regulatory Requirements

Today's healthcare CIOs must meet the demands of the patients/ consumers, physicians, administration – and the Federal Government. The volume and complexity of regulatory requirements have increased so much that the ability to stay on top of regulatory requirements is now on the Top Ten list. While these requirements put the CIO into a more strategic position within the health system, (s)he must monitor and ensure there is a solid understanding of regulations throughout the IT organization. This includes Meaningful Use of an Electronic Health Record, EHR, Stages 1, 2, and 3, HIPAA, ICD-10 and beyond. With the huge financial ramifications to meeting (or not meeting) these deadlines, the CIO must also ensure that the health system administration understands these deadlines. It sounds simple, but not getting the requirements right can lead to gaps in strategic planning, misunderstandings, and project failure.

8. Collaborate

Working within the health system, the CIO must be successful working with key stakeholders across departments. For example, EHRs require continuous collaboration with clinicians due to the disruption it creates in workflow. ICD-10 requires collaboration with the CFO and Finance teams. Coordinating healthcare requires increased collaboration at all levels. The healthcare CIO, tasked with knitting the healthcare entities in the community together in the transition to ACOs, must be a great collaborator.

Viewing collaboration as both a skill and a mindset, we like to see evidence of a history of creating or working well with a structured process that has ensured effective collaboration, not just “strong communication skills”. True collaboration will ensure CIOs get a seat at the table in setting strategy. Collaborating will be critical to executing on the plan. We like to see evidence of collaborative process because that is repeatable.

7. Build Great Teams



As Bill Collins says in his book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't*, “you need to make sure you’ve got the right people on the bus and the right people in the right seats on the bus.” The same thing can be said of the healthcare CIOs teams. Building a great team requires a firm understanding of the goals, the timeframe, and then the resources. The CIO’s team also needs to be flexible to move quickly to achieve their goals. Therefore, a good CIO must “rebuild” teams as necessary, reallocating resources based on project demands in order to maximize the value team members bring. We like to understand whether a CIO built a team and to what scale, or did they reduce or reallocate resources and why. In each situation, the question is really about how they achieve maximum results from the team. There is much more to consider than whether a CIO had high or low turnover rates on his team.

6. Communicate, Motivate then Delegate

Strong CIOs build great teams that can take ownership of key tasks. But first, they must delegate. When you have the right person in the right role and they understand the vision, the value they bring, and the value to them, they typically want ownership of the task. Rather than micromanage, the CIO can more effectively support the team in other ways. For instance, by removing outside barriers to progress and ensuring there is good support across departments for the projects. Facilitating joint ownership in projects across departments is even better. CIOs that can convey a sense of the excitement and conviction of the people involved likely have done a great job of motivating their team.

5. Finding New Ways to Build Consensus Across the Organization

Gaining consensus for an EHR has been a challenge for CIOs as they just might lack consistent support for the effort in the midst of disrupting clinical workflows. That’s changed. Now it is important for the entire leadership team as it impacts revenue for the health system. The perception that these are “IT” projects is radically changing. With greater support for the EHR deployment, we see the

role of the Chief Medical Information Officer, the CMIO, emerging and gaining importance. A strong partnership between the CIO and CMIO can speed consensus as the clinicians gain a voice and a better understanding of the workflow implications offset by the value an EHR can bring. Clinical Informatics leadership can be another great ally for the CIO in gaining consensus. We love to see CIOs who develop great partnerships between IT teams and the clinical team as well as operations, finance, and marketing teams.

4. Use Technology as a Tool to Deliver on the Strategy

Technology is really just a great enabler. Understanding how technology can improve clinical and financial outcomes is more meaningful than an IT initiative. Positioned appropriately, technology can be perceived as a tremendous strategic advantage, even with workflow modifications. Within the community, technology can also be a strategic distinguisher and competitive advantage for the health system. A great CIO helps translate the value to the health system's strategy.

3. Execute on the Strategy

“Execution is everything” says Larry Bossidy, former CEO of Honeywell in his book *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, “and the ability to create, influence and evangelize change is an essential element.” The healthcare CIO's challenge is not to set strategy – it is to *execute* on the strategy. The execution of a strategic initiative is usually more difficult than setting the strategy. The CIO who can execute on the vision and move through the challenges usually employs all of the skills previously listed and demonstrates this with a track record superior results. This CIO is frequently acknowledged as a leader among peers.

3. Set the Strategy

The trust established through helping to solve system challenges through complex EHR deployments while gaining buy-in throughout the system can be huge. As healthcare CIOs help to translate the value of technology to the enterprise in specific, tangible ways, it should become a natural transition to engage in the visioning of the system's strategy. We all like to see healthcare CIOs communicate a keen understanding of the key issues impacting healthcare, the community and government.

1. Lead and Mentor

These CIOs are truly passionate about transforming healthcare and it inspires those around them. This is seen in the teams that surround healthcare CIOs and in the creative and / or thoughtful manner in which they achieve their goals. When mistakes occur they help understand the lesson behind it. When their insights are sought, they are happy to share knowledge. In spite of busy schedules, these individuals seem to make time. This quality makes those around them feel important to the overall mission. These individuals inspire our appreciation and we are happy to acknowledge them and support their leadership. We like to see CIOs who are mentoring those around them to become effective future leaders.



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