

6 Challenges Health Care Executives Face with Data Governance

Over the last few months, data governance has become a buzzword in the health care industry. As companies realize the importance of Big Data, they are also beginning to realize the necessity of implementing a data governance strategy. While a system that helps organize, protect and give meaning to data seems like a no-brainer, implementing an effective data governance strategy can prove to be challenging...especially for an industry as complex as health care.

In this slideshow, **Dimensional Insight**, the 2015/2016 "Best in KLAS" business intelligence/analytics provider, highlights six common challenges health care executives experience when it comes to data governance and how they can overcome them.



Overcoming Health Care Governance Challenges

Six common challenges health care executives experience when it comes to data governance and how they can overcome them, as identified by Dimensional Insight.

Lack of Executive Support

Because a data governance initiative requires a fairly comprehensive foundation, many health care executives and board members are often unaware of the support that is initially required. Because of this, even the most experienced CIOs and IT executives do not know how to create an efficient, effective strategy, and trying to get the program off of the ground can easily become overwhelming.

However, it is important that health care executives know that creating the foundation does not have to be arduous. In fact, keeping it simple in the beginning can help shorten the path to reliable and useful information.

Appropriate Resources

Because most organizations require a governance committee when kicking off a data governance initiative, a significant amount of staff bandwidth is needed and health care organizations may struggle due to limited resources. Aside from executive leadership, governance boards also should include data owners, data stewards, data architects and data analysts, a fact that can be overlooked.

The good news for health care executives, however, is that it's possible to implement a powerfully efficient and effective data governance initiative without a massive investment in time or staff resources. By engaging an experienced professional or independent facilitator, health care organizations can make sure that no time or resources are wasted while ensuring that goals are met. These experts can also help guide health care executives through the maze of potential missteps.

Siloed Data Owners

Many health care executives that are starting off with a data governance program come to find that their data owners are far too removed from the business' operations and corporate activities. Because of this, effectively integrating data owners into the company-wide initiative often becomes an unforeseen challenge.

Another benefit of using an experienced expert or independent facilitator is that their main responsibility is to make sure data governance initiatives are focused on the information that will best help the organization reach their goals. This also ensures that health care organizations are getting the useful information into the hands of executives who can do something with it.

Little Trust in Resulting Data

A common theme with many data governance programs is the resulting data becoming inconsistent, inaccurate and having questionable outliers. Since health care information is recorded across many platforms and technologies — such as stand-alone, siloed databases, large multi-purpose EHRs, and mobile and handheld technology — producing and maintaining one version of the truth can become even more complicated. Because of this, health care executives see this unstandardized data and are often left questioning whether the information is in fact accurate. In order to find the truth, a data governance program must control and dictate the data integration policies for the whole health care organization.

Difficulty of Training

A critical component of having an effective data governance solution is ensuring that the entire health care organization is on board with the program. A frequently forgotten step is the need for a company-wide policy for educating, training and supporting users on data governance practices to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Making training available for health care executives must be a top priority in order to ensure data governance programs are a success. Providing online examples and explanations can be even more effective than in-person training from both a timing and logistics standpoint.

Varying Data Protections

While it is extremely important to have restrictions and protections on who in the organization can access company data, many organizations find that they are inconsistent on these limitations and boundaries. This is especially crucial for health care organizations who can risk having patient data fall into the wrong hands.

The only way to overcome this type of challenge is making sure that a health care data governance initiative is first and foremost protecting the data in an IT environment. By ensuring appropriate, consistent data access and restrictions, health care executives can make sure data is protected and in the correct hands.

An effective data governance strategy is at the heart of a health care organization's ability to use data to improve outcomes and create a meaningful analytics program. While there are common challenges that health care organizations need to overcome, keeping these best practices in mind can help health care executives realize the real potential of an effective data governance initiative.