Dimensional INSIGHT

Five Healthcare Analytics Myths

BUSTED!

Picking out a healthcare analytics solution is not your run-of-the-mill Clark Kent kind of job. In fact, it often feels like a job meant for a superhero. You need to jump through hoops to determine your specs and what you need in a solution. But that's hard to do when you're faced with your nemeses of Stagnancy and Misinformation.

So how can you combat these evil villains? Fighting Stagnancy requires everyone on your analytics purchasing team to be on the same page, which is a hard task. To do that, you first have to cut through the deceits of Misinformation. In this white paper, we'll do just that, unmasking Misinformation by busting common healthcare analytics myths.

Let's debunk 5 of these myths so you can be the slick superhero you were meant to be.

Dossier

Name: Stagnancy

Interests: Just sitting around. Maybe checking Facebook.

Secret weapon: Able to use a large buying team to stifle progress.

Dossier

Name: Misinformation

Interests: Spreading lies. Laughing at the results.

Secret weapon: Realistic-looking disguises to throw you off the right trail.

TOP SECRET
CONFIDENTIAL
TOP SECRET

BANG! BANG!

BANG! BANG!

1. I NEED A DATA WAREHOUSE BEFORE I GET STARTED WITH HEALTHCARE ANALYTICS.

Have you heard from healthcare technology vendors that you absolutely, positively NEED a data warehouse to do healthcare analytics correctly? Misinformation is all over this myth. It's just not true.

You need analytics to help you reach your goals quickly and efficiently, and a data warehouse just doesn't reflect the realities of that.

Truth is, a data warehouse is a very stationary concept: once in the warehouse, most of the data will change very little. However, some of the most interesting and useful information is that which reflects what's happening right now.

Data is dynamic so why dedicate a warehouse to static information that will decrease in usefulness over time? This is one place where Stagnancy creeps in, leading to a less-than-impressive implementation.

Instead, it's important to look at analytics solutions that shift the emphasis to:

1. Extracting data from its original sources

2. Combining and transforming the information

3. Determining what's most useful to your users

4. Getting information to users quickly

5. Focusing on the aspects of the problem representing the highest value

What's most important is a continuous and timely flow of information that represents the current state of the organization and its processes, and how that state is changing over time.

TIP Gartner estimates 80% of "build it and they will come" data warehouse implementations in which data warehouses are constructed prior to user input are considered failures. Make sure IT and the user community are on the same page before implementation to ensure success.

2. I CAN JUST USE THE ANALYTICS PROVIDED WITHIN MY EHR.

Have you heard that specific operational, clinical or financial solutions are extremely adept at analyzing and reporting data from within their specific domains? Don't trust this whopper either.

• Do you know for sure that these systems can readily bring data elements together from across several sources

• Can they analyze large amounts of data from these different systems?

• Are vendors telling you the whole story?

And what about your EHR system? EHRs come with their own host of challenges: large data warehouse requirements, poor visualization, and limited integration, just to name a few. Plus, you may still have to invest in expensive data lifecycle management tools to attempt to integrate and view data. That takes a long time and it's expensive!

How can a super hero fight this Misinformation?

• Be sure any analytics solution you are investigating can integrate multiple data sources, not just a single stream of information

• Look for a comprehensive solution with pre-built connectors to sources

• Ensure the solution can aggregate and analyze organization-wide for comprehensive clinical, operational, and financial reporting

TIP Limited analytics from your EHR can lead to disappointment, and Stagnancy thrives on disappointment. Rather than going with your EHR's analytics, seek vendors that partner with EHRs. They will have the domain expertise you want, while also being able to skillfully tie together data from multiple sources.

3. I NEED TO KNOW EXACTLY ALL MY GOALS AT THE OUTSET.

Time doesn't stop and neither should you. Measurement and analysis over time lead to constant readjustments, improvement, and new BI initiatives. Misinformation loves to spread this rumor, but truth is, you don't need to know everything at the beginning of your project.

BI implementation, especially at an enterprise level, works best when it functions more like Agile software development. By implementing analytics in a staged or phased manner, you can learn from each step in the process, refine your goals and objectives and how you get there, and celebrate "quick wins" along the way.

Keep in mind that:

• What you study also changes

• As the business grows and changes, your BI system must accommodate that

• Treat data analytics as iterative, flexible, and rapid

• Adapt your BI capabilities to keep pace with your business

TIP

Stagnancy is best fought by implementing this "quick win" strategy. Superheroes know that celebrating smaller wins throughout the implementation process is not only morale-boosting for your employees, but it also shows ROI more quickly to management.

Many vendors espouse storytelling with data, claiming their visuals let you tell stories, but make sure you're telling fact, not fiction. Have you heard the story about the elephant?

In the parable *The Blind Men and the Elephant*, six blind men were each asked to describe an elephant. Each man felt a different part of the animal and described what they felt. One man felt the tail and described the elephant as a rope. One felt the belly and described the elephant as a wall. One felt the trunk and said the elephant was like a tree. While each man was correct in his own way, none could see the overall truth. The same can be said of data analytics.

Clinicians have strong opinions about the technology they use – and rightly so – so they are deeply involved in the analytics software selection process. The problem? This deep involvement frequently causes the selection to be skewed toward the solution that has the best Web-enabled display or the biggest, brightest or fastest-loading graphics.

Until you dive down into the data, look at it in different ways and analyze it, though, you're not seeing the whole elephant. That's what a lot of visualization tools are missing.

Instead you should look for a comprehensive analytics solution that allows data to be:

• Effective rather than just flashy and slick

• Collected from disparate sources

• Effectively transformed

• Applied from clear business rules

TIP
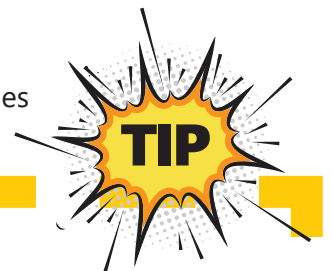
User surveys provide valuable advice as to what works and what doesn't. It's notable that overall performance scores for the BI/Analytics category in the 2014 "Best in KLAS: Software & Services" report show users receive more value from vendors able to live up to the true "analytics" claim rather than just straight data visualization.

5. NO ONE EVER GOT FIRED FOR BUYING FROM THE BIGGEST BI COMPANIES.

One of the biggest lies that Misinformation loves to spread around is that buying from the biggest BI companies is the safe choice. But truth is that bigger isn't better.

Here's some proof: Dresner Advisory Services' 2015 Wisdom of Crowds® Business Intelligence Market Study surveyed BI users on satisfaction. This survey is notable for both its user-centric nature and the breadth of the users it surveys (1,495 BI users spread throughout industries such as technology, financial services, healthcare, education, and much more). Of note:

• The average score of those vendors in the "BI Titans" category (the biggest BI vendors) was 3.52 versus 4.28 for all others

• For the "Specialized BI" category, BI vendors are characteristically smaller than others, but are established (10+ years old), focused on a specific market segment, and have higher overall scores

Unfortunately, this is where Stagnancy often comes into the picture to work with Misinformation to confuse BI and analytics purchasing groups. When many stakeholders are involved in buying analytics, there's a temptation to pick the "safest" bet – which is usually thought to be one of the biggest BI vendors. That's just not so.

Don't be left unimpressed by your eventual analytics solution. It's important to find the right fit for your organization's needs. In doing so, you could really be elevated to superhero status. No matter your final decision, there are best practices you can follow:

• Be sure to partner with a vendor that understands the complexities of your data sources and business rules

• Make sure the company can help guide you on your journey of which KPIs to measure and analyze that will uncover opportunities for improvement

• Understand that deriving value from data doesn't just happen; it needs to focus on both the technology and the human element of an analytics program

TIP
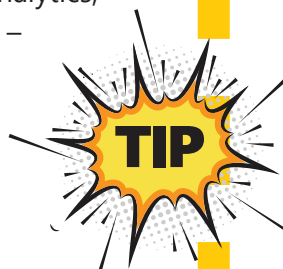
The size of the purchasing group matters too. It's a decision that's best made by a select few, rather than the masses, as supported by a study conducted by SAVO. This study found the smaller the size of the purchasing group, the greater the purchase likelihood, or the consensus-based sale, with an average buying group size of 5.4.

WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE? THE CHOICE IS ALL YOURS. ARE YOU READY FOR THE CHALLENGE?

In this fast-changing digital economy, understanding the different skills needed to deliver business insights will allow you to harness your inner superhero and defeat the villains. You have the power to harness big data for good, to triumph over Misinformation and Stagnancy in your data-driven organization.