

TEAM INTERNATIONAL

IT Solutions: On Time, On Target... Your TEAM

Why Outsource Healthcare IT Staffing?



Introduction

The healthcare industry is ultimately the most complex in needs, data demands, regulations, market size and revenue models, core functions and outsourcing niche vendors. Regardless of the fact that in recent years the complexity of healthcare IT solutions has significantly increased, this industry is still projected to be one of the most dynamically developing and fastest growing segments of IT technologies' implementation and development in 2009.

Current call for EMR/EHR implementation in US healthcare

On February 17, 2009, US President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act ("ARRA") as a \$787 billion "economic stimulus law". This Act launched new federal mandates on health information technology (HIT) and privacy of personally identifiable information (PII). ARRA encourages healthcare and patient care facilities to adopt a wider use of electronic medical/ health records (EMR/EHR).

The benefits of EMR/EHR are too obvious to list. First and foremost, EMR/EHR technology helps increase productivity by supporting automation of clinical processes from filing paper charts and prescribing medications to storing sensitive patient data, managing accounting information and consulting on treatment options. The second benefit of EMR/EHR consists in revenue increase. Implementation of medical billing software allows healthcare facilities to offer new services to patients, to attract new businesses and reduce workload on the medical staff. In spite of rather high costs of implementation, EMR/EHR technology promises to boost healthcare profits in a long-term perspective by improving patient satisfaction and office image resulting in increased patient referrals and retention. EMR/EHR software comes with many in-built and added-on tools able to help physicians make faster and prompter decisions. Such tools include, but are not limited to: diagnosis and prescribing medications, automated appointment reminders, automated treatment planning etc. EMR/EHR technology is also able to eliminate queues in the physician's office and missed appointments by allowing patients to arrange an appointment and receive an electronic reminder online.

In overall, EMR/EHR will allow better physician-patient interaction, physician-physician communication, higher quality treatment and protection of sensitive information.

The federalization of encryption and security norms for PII and EMR/EHR promises a new wave of government-funded IT contracts with private contractors, advisors and consultants. According to Accenture Electronic Health Records Survey (2005), the major barriers to successful and effective EMR/EHR implementation are:

- Capital costs
- Physicians' resistance to learn new technology
- Lack of technology standards
- Increase of IT staff workloads

It is important to note that the increasing of IT staff workloads is one of the most frequently cited obstacles. As many as 17% of the Survey participants reported the drastic impact of EMR/HER adoption on IT staff. Considering that the task of implementation is a temporary one augmenting in-house staff with the contract IT specialists would be a better solution than hiring permanent workers.

Vendor market notes

According to Wipro Health Industry Insights Report (2008), healthcare IT vendor market is fragmented by solution set, geography and segment. The market is dominated by the major hospital information system vendors such as Cerner, Epic, Eclipsys, GE Healthcare, McKesson, Siemens, Meditech etc. In regards to physician adoption of EMR/EHR, the vendor market is both fragmented and opened for new joiners.

Healthcare IT staffing outsourcing: current state of affairs, benefits and expectations

Today's US healthcare organizations are faced with growing pressure to reduce overall labor costs and at the same time to improve the quality of patient care. In order to painlessly and efficiently implement the required technology, organizations need to access the best IT talent pool requiring the latest technology skills coupled with excellent recruiting expertise.

Progressive healthcare organizations are currently resolving the problem of IT talent shortage by choosing to partner with recruiting experts with enormous side experience and outside perspective. The professional vendors can support healthcare services providers with qualified teams of IT experts able to fill in all of the gaps relating to poor technology implementation.

No secret that in the healthcare industry people are the single biggest expense (nearly 60% of the total cost structure). To find, attract and retain qualified professionals to meet the growing IT demand is a real challenge.

Healthcare IT staffing outsourcing can be a valuable option to leverage the organizations' screening capabilities of narrowing the funnel of prospects to those people who have qualifications, desire and commitment to bring a positive IT change to the company.

Besides leveraging screening capabilities, healthcare IT staffing outsourcing can help companies standardize their recruitment practices, increase turnaround times and reduce vacancy rates down to 2.3 percent and increase overall efficiency by allowing healthcare facilities to focus on their core competencies.

Conclusion

President Obama's call for total automation of processes in the healthcare is matching a time of limited IT human resources, which puts a serious barrier in the way of successful EMR/HER adoption. Today's healthcare administrators are facing a challenge of having to transform and innovate while maintaining and/or reducing the total operating costs to the organization. Healthcare IT staffing outsourcing offers an effective means of increasing IT efficiency while cutting costs.

Sources: Accenture <www.accenture.com>; Wipro <www.wipro.com>