

Leaving Data on the Table

In 1775, Benjamin Franklin published a letter in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* urging his city of Philadelphia to onboard fire prevention methods he had observed on a recent trip to Boston. Hoping to avoid a potential tragedy, the letter began with his now-famous words: “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” The healthcare industry has largely been a reactionary business where new ideas are often discussed, but we get hung up in the narrative of “a foot in two canoes” or “maintaining versus innovating.” In our work across the country, we are seeing the old playbook, especially for health systems, create stress fractures including workforce shortages, provider burnout, and growing medical group losses to name a few. In May of 2021, we articulated the need to **reimagine the employed medical group**. One foundational component of this reimagination is the opportunity to stop leaving data on the table.

How do we start leveraging our data to prevent the crisis of the day? How can we use data analytics to have open and safe conversations between physicians and administration? How can we leverage transparent data across the medical group – yes, even unblinded data?

Hint: it does not start with building an enterprise data warehouse (EDW) or pretty dashboards. It starts with the people and a clear view of what success looks like – current state and strategically. Understanding how we make money and spend money, in addition to how we articulate our value, positions an organization to excel in conversations with potential new partners.

The Right People

A successful data analytics strategy should be the responsibility of all business and clinical leaders, not just IT or the “analytics team.” However, in today’s environment, data management often falls almost entirely on the shoulders of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) or Chief Analytics Officer (CAO) in a more progressive organization. As the CAO doesn’t observe the daily ins and outs of practice management, they can only solve problems as practice managers, clinicians, or operators report them. Essentially, their job is to *repair* issues that have already transpired. Unfortunately, this means an organization’s data strategy is extremely reactionary.

We recommend a coalition approach, where data management becomes a hybrid governance between the CAO **and** clinical and service line leaders. When data is shared with the broader organization, the operations team is able to anticipate problems before they occur—Ben Franklin’s “fire prevention,” if you will. As those managing the day-to-day, local teams are best equipped to observe worrying trends and preempt any issues. And, while these teams focus on directing patient care, the CAO is freed up to concentrate on continuing to build out a more comprehensive data program – perhaps developing analytics-enabled solutions to preempt growing burnout among medical staff. Collaboration across operational and clinical silos results in improved staff morale, increased revenue, and solidified future planning initiatives – growing an organization which disseminates and communicates internal data effectively, resulting in a culture of success.

Right Place, Right Time

Another element of a proactive data strategy is understanding that a Single Source of Truth (SSoT) is more than just a centralized EDW. It's important to create data architecture that doesn't silo information but governs it instead. A good SSoT allows for data democratization, enabling non-technical users to connect to data from across the organization and trust that the information is accurate and consistent. Right now, many organizations lack this centralization, allowing for different interpretations of the data—or even different calculations for the same metric. However, a proactive approach to data strategy is one that not only delivers consistent information, but also promotes further curiosity in its readers, even and especially those without substantial technical knowledge. When combined with a strong SSoT, data analytics can provide answers and encourage questions.

The approach to a data strategy like this isn't to set-it-and-forget-it. It requires maintenance, including enhancing data literacy across the organization. If you adopt a "data for all" approach, you must also ensure that end users in multiple roles can understand and use that data to manage or improve their work. The more people you equip with this knowledge, the more proactive you can be at all levels of the organization. We believe that this hybrid environment with data governance and metric standards within a centralized data warehouse can proactively enable non-technical users to derive insights organically. Of course, developing and executing this kind of data strategy takes an investment of time and money now, but you'll make it up and more in the long run.

Watch it in Action

About a year ago, a large health system employed medical group reached out to us with a big challenge. They were on Epic and had a centralized analytics team, but some departments did their own thing, creating multiple sources of truth. They originally reached out to have us create another source of truth. Instead, Ancore engaged both the analytics and medical group leaders to assess gaps in their existing data strategy and develop a plan moving forward, one where the medical group leaders are being heard and prioritized and the analytics leaders have sufficient governance and controls over things like metric definitions, brand, etc.

The first step was communication between **the right people**. We gathered everyone around the table and encouraged collaboration between the technical teams and the subject matter experts. Then, we focused on **the right place and right time**. As they learned to speak each other's language, we built reporting solutions in their environment that would work for non-technical users. It was important, both to us and to them, to build something sustainable. Now, a year later, we have transitioned all the dashboard maintenance over to their team. They have the power to not only fix bugs, but add or refine dashboards as they see fit.

There is No One Without the Other

The right people, the right place, and the right time are inextricably linked and equally essential to a proactive data strategy. The healthcare industry is only scratching the surface in terms of the power of data. Based on our experience, high performing medical groups have consistent, transparent, and accurate reporting for both administrative and clinical leaders. Many of these leaders recognize how effective data and analytics can be, but ultimately, **the right culture can really be the biggest hurdle to becoming a**

data driven organization. You must invest in data architecture that does more than just silo information. Only then will you begin to transition from *repairing* to *preparing*.

If you're ready to take your data strategy to the next level, shoot us a message.

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