

New research and expert opinions in the area of hospital and health system governance.

E-Briefings

The Convergence of Digital Strategies, the Healthcare Consumer, and Employee Engagement

By Rulon F. Stacey, Ph.D., FACHE, Partner, Navigant, a Guidehouse company

Consumer demands for a more connected experience are turning traditional care models upside down. This is happening at a time when growth and margin compression is being exacerbated by persistent reimbursement changes. As a result, care delivery must evolve in real time. This is requiring providers to operate at the nexus of performance improvement, strategic growth, and digital health—all while building care around the consumer.

Healthcare executives and experts from across the country convened in Chicago in late 2019 to discuss these and other key issues at Navigant's third annual CEO Forum. Following are their collective insights, lessons learned, and best practices on overcoming current and future healthcare pressures.

Healthcare's Big Business Transformation

Make no mistake, the healthcare

¹ [2018 CEO Forum: Improving the Health of Communities Amid a Volatile Landscape](#), Navigant, February 2019.

provider industry is big business, and hospitals and health systems must operate like other large corporations to enhance performance and drive value. Nowhere is this more apparent than the need to leverage digital capabilities to improve operations and consumer and employee engagement.

For providers, enhancing consumer engagement means offering people the same sort of experience they're getting in retail, travel, banking, and other aspects of their lives. In other words, providers need to do the things that large businesses do, something that will move us beyond many of the traditional platforms that we've relied upon in healthcare.

As 2018 CEO Forum attendees

discussed,¹ while it was anticipated that electronic health records (EHRs) would be the main driver of broad provider performance improvement, that has not been the case for many care providers. The significant capital and resource investments providers have made in their EHRs have many organizations working to overcome unrealistic expectations that have led to an overreliance on these systems as a one-stop solution.

But as one CEO Forum executive suggested, there's a lot more out there that we need to be thinking about to wrap around the EHR. Providers that have their EHR foundation in place are now looking to optimize their digital capabilities, including leveraging advanced technologies that have improved

Key Board Takeaways

Boards should consider the following approaches to enhance their digital strategies to improve consumer and employee engagement:

- Do we have unrealistic expectations about our EHR as a one-stop solution for our digital capabilities?
- What advanced technologies should we wrap around our EHR to improve consumer and employee engagement?
- What can we learn from other industries with regard to providing an optimal consumer experience?
- How can we use the data we have to generate knowledge about our patients' habits, as well as educate and inform clinicians to improve performance?
- How can we leverage the movement toward price transparency to get a deeper view of our revenue and better understand current performance while accurately projecting future scenarios?



For providers, enhancing consumer engagement means offering people the same sort of experience they're getting in retail, travel, banking, and other aspects of their lives.

consumer and employee engagement in other industries.

For example, AdventHealth, based in Altamonte Springs, Florida, took a page directly from NASA's playbook with the development of its "Mission Control" command center, designed to make the health system's clinical operations as streamlined and efficient as possible to the benefit of both consumers and employees.² Mission Control features 60 monitors that continually display near-time information, such as patient bed and helicopter and ambulance status. The 12,000-square-foot high-tech center is staffed around the clock by a team of clinicians and other specialists who use artificial intelligence (AI) to inform and guide decision making in areas including patient transfers and prioritization of placement and treatment. Mission Control is currently deployed across eight of AdventHealth's central Florida campuses with plans to eventually roll it out across the entire organization, which includes nearly 50 hospital campuses and hundreds of care sites in diverse markets throughout almost a dozen states.

Building Care Around the Consumer

Healthcare as we know it has been built around the provider. An impactful digital structure must be developed around the consumers, CEO Forum attendees suggested.

Minnesota-based HealthPartners, the largest, consumer-governed, non-profit healthcare organization in the

nation, polled consumers in their markets about their wants and needs. HealthPartners, which operates both a care delivery system and a health plan, found affordability and a lack of associated surprises to be at the top of consumers' lists as well, and they want providers to show them that they truly understand their wants and needs.

Data analytics can play a pivotal role generating knowledge about consumers that even they may not be aware of. For instance, HealthPartners conducted a pilot around preventive screening. While the organization had strong mammogram screening results, there was still a subset of women they could not get in for a mammogram despite personalized outreach. By placing the women into categories based on consumer styles and preferences, HealthPartners was able to increase screening rates by 20 percent.

Empowering Clinician Engagement

The technology and data hospitals and health systems utilize should also focus on educating and informing clinicians about their performance, CEO Forum attendees agreed.

Sharing quality, patient experience, and cost of care data can be a major eye-opener for clinicians who believe they're doing an optimal job practicing according to evidence-based standards but may not be performing as well as they think. "We've found that clinicians will improve their performance when

information is shared and they can see how they're really doing," one CEO noted.

Healthcare organizations are also leveraging leaders from other industries to engage care teams on delivering more reliable care. AdventHealth hired a Navy admiral who previously ran a nuclear submarine base to help the health system with safety and security. The system found that having their care teams hear from people they both respect and admire is key to the process.

HealthPartners has worked with NASA astronaut Nancy J. Currie-Gregg, who led the Space Shuttle Program's Safety and Mission Assurance Office assisting with NASA's Return to Flight efforts following the 2003 Columbia tragedy. A key lesson learned for HealthPartners is the power of storytelling, which can be as effective in healthcare as it is in consumer experience work.

Price Transparency's Clear Revenue Opportunity

The potential for healthcare price transparency became more of a reality with the introduction of long-anticipated HHS legislation. The proposed rules would require hospitals to clearly publish standard charges online for at least 300 common services in a consumer-friendly manner. While anticipated legal challenges may impact the final rule in 2021, it is clear that meaningful price transparency is a policy priority and a trend hospitals cannot ignore. CEO Forum attendees discussed how living in a more transparent world will force provider leadership to ask some uncomfortable questions. Are we concerned about our patients' response to our prices, and do we

² ["AdventHealth, GE Healthcare Open Nation's Largest Medical 'Mission Control,'"](#) Central Florida Division Corporate Communications, August 29, 2019.

have a defensible pricing strategy? And how can we target services for pricing in both fee-for-service and value-based arrangements while weighing competitors' presence, market payer mix, and clinical operating model readiness?

But with change comes opportunity for providers to attain a deeper view of whether they're charging too much or too little for services, to include commoditized consumer service pricing, service line margins, and balancing pricing for higher-acuity services. Such pricing evaluation will be even more essential for academic

health systems and large, regional providers.

As a result, health system leaders can no longer rely on historical revenue projection methodologies and anecdotal explanations when they miss revenue projections or embark on new strategic initiatives. Instead, they need to:

- Proactively manage their revenue like a portfolio to be periodically examined, compare it to existing strategic and clinical initiatives, and rebalance it according to performance.
- Know their data as well as payers

do and develop a customized revenue portfolio strategy for the future. Data analytics can help identify the root causes of a health system's revenue changes across such areas as collections, volume, and unit reimbursement.

Such a portfolio approach can create a single source of truth and allow leaders to fully understand current performance while accurately projecting future scenarios, including primary drivers of revenue risk and their potential unfavorable financial impacts.

The Governance Institute thanks Rulon F. Stacey, Ph.D., FACHE, Partner at Navigant, a Guidehouse company, and Director of Health Administration Guidance Programs at the University of Colorado Denver, for contributing this article. He can be reached at rulon.stacey@guidehouse.com.

