

Consensus-building, Project Plans Key to IG Implementation

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By Mary Butler

Healthcare isn't the only industry embarking on an information governance (IG) journey—plenty of other industries and organizations are too—and getting started is one of the hardest steps along the way. But developing a project plan for IG should be a powerful first step if done correctly, two top IG experts explained in a webinar, “Creating an IG Project Plan,” on Thursday.

Contoural Inc.'s Mark Diamond, president and CEO, and Kathryn Hilton, vice president of consulting at Contoural, stressed the importance of crafting an IG roadmap to help frame an organization's “big picture” and long-term goals of implementing IG.

“Some organizations back into these projects,” Diamond said. “Know what you want to do ahead of time and have that on your roadmap. You don't need to complete the elements it all at once, but have a big picture perspective up front.”

That roadmap must include a maturity model and/or a gap analysis component to that allows planners to analyze their organization's strength and weaknesses and to gauge how much of an appetite upper management has for engaging in IG. Ideally, a roadmap should be a document developed by an IG council or taskforce with representatives from a number of different departments, such as legal, IT, risk management, finance, HR, etc.

Building Consensus

Once an organization has started formulating a roadmap, the next—and possibly the second most important step—is getting the support of upper management and building consensus for IG. Diamond and Hilton said getting management's attention is difficult but possible.

“As you build your roadmap, if you can put together a comparison of [your company] versus your peers, this is probably the single most powerful way to communicate your cause. Nobody wants to be the least prepared. They want to be in the middle of the pack,” Diamond advised.

Some organizations can get stuck, however, by attempting to take on too many components of the project plan at the same time, or by trying to “boil the ocean,” according to Hilton. While the roadmap should be comprehensive, it should also be padded with feedback from the various interdisciplinary groups on the IG council.

“The roadmap should say what we want to do and what level we want to be at. This is hard. It's unnatural to want to go to a big group of people and say what you want to do. Getting buy-in is time well spent, because once you have initial support and consensus, things go much more smoothly,” Diamond said.

Mary Butler is the associate editor at The Journal of AHIMA.

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