

State of Information Governance in 2016: Healthcare Organizations Stand Out, But More Work is Needed

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By Barclay T. Blair and Ann Snyder

Though the discipline of information governance (IG) is relatively young, research from the Information Governance Initiative (IGI) shows that organizations today are spending real money on IG and taking on a variety of IG projects. Simply put, IG work is getting done.

But how advanced is that work? Specifically, how mature are organizations' IG programs? Further, how does the healthcare industry compare to average IG maturity across sectors?

As part of the research conducted for the IGI Annual Report 2015-2016, IGI set out to assess the state of IG program maturity. The survey population had representation from practitioners, providers, and analysts, with the largest group of respondents coming from the practitioner community across a wide range of verticals in addition to healthcare, including: finance/banking/insurance, government/military, pharmaceutical/chemical, and utilities.

IG practitioners were asked to rate the overall maturity of their organizations' IG programs, and also rate maturity across five specific areas of their program. IGI used a four-point capability maturity scale to measure IG maturity, comprised of: Non-Existent, Nascent, Intermediate, and Advanced (in ascending order of maturity). In addition, IGI asked practitioners to assess whether their IG programs were fundamentally "reactive" or "proactive," based on IGI's belief that proactivity is a key measure of overall IG program maturity. Results from the research are shown in the infographic at right.

The vast majority of practitioners rank the overall maturity of their IG programs as either Nascent or Intermediate (see the full Annual Report for a detailed explanation of what each maturity level means at <http://iginitiative.com/reports/information-governance-initiative-annual-report-2015-2016/>). Results were similar across the five additional IG program elements. Very few organizations reported IG program maturity as Non-Existent, and a substantial portion ranked their program and its elements as Intermediate. This demonstrates that most organizations have started to take action on IG, and that a good portion are well down the road. Overall, practitioners were almost evenly split in rating the overall posture of their IG programs, with 46 percent characterizing their programs as Proactive, and 48 percent as Reactive.

So how does the healthcare industry compare? IGI research shows that healthcare IG practitioners generally see their programs as more mature than others. This is not surprising. The IGI expects (and indeed hopes) that healthcare organizations are more mature given the critical role of highly sensitive information in this complex and regulated environment. IGI's research confirmed that assumption.

Practitioner Self-Assessment of IG Maturity

PRACTITIONER SELF-ASSESSMENT OF IG PROGRAM MATURITY



In fact, the number of healthcare IG practitioners who describe their IG programs as Proactive is 41 percent higher than the average across all industries. Healthcare IG practitioners rank their IG programs overall as Advanced at more than triple the rate of the average across all industries. They also ranked most of their individual IG program elements as Advanced at more than double (sometimes considerably more) the rate of the industry average. Clearly the IG programs at the healthcare organizations participating in IGI's research are further ahead than most.

But, as with all industry sectors, there is room for improvement in healthcare. For example, a higher than average percentage of healthcare IG practitioners describe their organization's "coordination among IG facets" as Non-Existent. Other data suggests that this lack of coordination (or "siloing") among individuals and departments with IG responsibilities may be a bigger issue for healthcare than other sectors. In fact, healthcare IG practitioners report it as their number one barrier to getting IG work done.

This frustration is interesting given that a much higher percentage of healthcare organizations (65 percent) report having an IG Steering Committee or similar group in place than the industry average (37 percent). Perhaps these committees are not effective or are suffering from a lack of clarity around mandate, authority, budget, and decision-making processes (as is common). This would be a fruitful area for further research.

The reasons for healthcare organizations to invest in IG are very clear. A total of 95 percent of healthcare IG practitioners identified "external regulatory, compliance, or legal obligations" as the top driver of IG at their organizations—44 percent more than the total industry average. Sixty-five percent of IG practitioners in healthcare identified "external triggering events," such as lawsuits, breaches, and investigations, as the second most important driver, ranking 23 percent higher than the total industry average. IG practitioners in healthcare clearly understand what is at stake.

Although IGI's research shows that healthcare organizations are generally ahead of the IG curve, there is much work to be done. After all, even though healthcare practitioners ranked their programs as Advanced at triple the rate of the average across all industries, as mentioned above, this accounts for only 15 percent of healthcare organizations rating their overall IG programs as Advanced, despite the reality that this sector clearly requires advanced IG approaches. The average Advanced ranking across all industries was a mere four percent.

After years of addressing the requirements of HIPAA, dealing with frequent litigation, investing in information technology, and operating in a competitive and complex environment, healthcare organizations should indeed not only be ahead of the curve, but much, much further ahead. Overall, healthcare IG practitioners should take heart that their organizations are starting to take real IG action and should try to take advantage of that momentum to make significant IG progress in 2016.

Download the IGI Annual Report 2015-2016

<http://iginitiative.com/reports/information-governance-initiative-annual-report-2015-2016>

To learn more about the state of IG in 2016, visit the IGI website and download a complimentary copy of the IGI Annual Report.

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Article citation:

Blair, Barclay T; Snyder, Ann. "State of Information Governance in 2016: Healthcare Organizations Stand Out, But More Work is Needed" *Journal of AHIMA* 87, no.2 (February 2016): 30-31.

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