

Three Keys to Simplifying Interoperability in Healthcare [sponsored article]

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There's no question that healthcare is in the middle of a data explosion. New sources of information like medical devices, wearables, and mobile apps are being introduced all the time.

While more information can do wonders for clinical decision making and improving operational efficiencies, it can also introduce more complexity when it comes to integration.

So, here's three pieces of practical advice to help you simplify things:

1. Don't wait for anyone else to 'solve' interoperability for you

The lack of data standards is one of the most talked-about topics when it comes to interoperability in healthcare. Every few years or so, a new standard comes along that sparks thoughts of the long-awaited universal standard for data exchange. Unfortunately, that's not going to happen.

Let's take [FHIR](#), developed under the Health Level Seven (HL7) organization, for example. While FHIR, which stands for Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources, has shown some real potential—especially in the mobile device arena—it simply won't be able to displace the established standards in healthcare.

Take a minute to consider how much of today's clinical integration uses [HL7](#), or think about the amount of financial information being shared in the format of [X12](#).

Once a standard has taken a strong foothold in a market, it's nearly impossible to dislodge it. Not to mention it would be a very costly undertaking with little to no obvious reward to do so.

Interoperability is all about the value created from data, no matter how it's formatted or where it resides. If you're waiting for a single universal standard or for yet another government mandate to solve interoperability, you're leaving far too much value on the table.

Stop waiting and start doing.

2. Create your own standard

The reality of healthcare's multi-standard landscape can seem daunting, but it's not all bad news. The more standards there are, the more available data there is. As mentioned earlier in this article, the more available data there is, the more opportunities to make well informed decisions.

The trick is getting to the point of being able to treat all standards equally and effectively. To do so, your data needs to be brought together into a unified data model, so that all of the data is standardized and can be used as a single continuous source of information.

The benefits of standardizing data extend to interface development as well. It makes it much easier to bring on new interfaces and maintain existing ones.

For example, consider that you have a large number of incoming data feeds that need to go into the electronic health record (EHR). If you first map these feeds to a normalized data structure, then you can create a single standardized interface to the EHR. This ensures that any changes made to the EHR connection are shared across all incoming feeds, rather than updating each standalone interface.

It's easy to see how having a well-thought-out data model can pay huge dividends when it comes to dealing with high volumes of data that come in many different formats from a range of diverse sources.

3. Leverage the right technology

Once a standardized data model is in place, the next step is to select the right technology to bring all of your diverse sources of information together.

If you're using an outdated interface engine for integration, you likely find them to be heavyweight, difficult to change, and possibly incompatible with the cloud—or even find that they just don't support the data formats of today's modern applications.

A more advanced, modern integration engine will better suit those needs. One that is lightweight and highly reliable and supports all of healthcare's standards. Of course, it also must make development faster. Sound too good to be true?

Healthcare is more than capable of doing what the transportation and financial industries have already done in terms of giving people the right information at the right time. The technology exists today to make it happen.

It is possible for you to have reliable, low-cost, real-time access to all of your information sources, and keeping the above advice in mind is a good place to start.

For further reading, please download iNTERFACEWARE's free guide:

[6 Reasons Why You Need a Modern Integration Engine](#).

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