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Executive Buy In of New HIT Initiatives

Healthcare management is investing a great deal of time, money, and effort into their current information systems. One of their expectations is that their physicians will use the system effectively.

To accomplish these goals it is important to first consider:

1. The quality and use of a Strategic IT Plan, because no one vendor can satisfy an organization's IT needs
2. The selection process used for acquiring new IT
3. Existing implementation policies
4. Existing practices
5. Existing controls in place to determine where vulnerabilities exist

After these issues have been evaluated, a prioritized action plan should address the healthcare organization's needs in the following key areas:

- Development of their Strategic IT Plan which includes identifying and documenting physicians' needs
- Strategies for optimal rollout and implementation, including customized training and support for clinicians that ensure optimal system use and ongoing benefits.
- Formal methodologies for assessing physician readiness, including existing technologies and future goal-oriented technologies.
- Assessment of the healthcare technology needs across the organization.
- Strategies to assess the less technological-savvy physicians, and define value propositions to promote adoption for all healthcare professionals.
- Strategies to minimize the challenges with overcoming time issues with physicians.
- Identifying and remedying performance issues, and strategic protocols for technology down time.
- Definition of training and education programs for clinicians and other professional staff.
- Best practices and procedures for promoting education and training of residents, staff physicians, and other professional staff.
- Optimization of existing technology so that physicians and other professional staff more readily recognize the benefits in using it.
- Methods for encouraging organization-wide support and changing the status-quo culture.
- Suggested changes to existing policies and recommendations for additional policies and procedures, where appropriate.
- Definitions of controls necessary to insure compliance with HIPAA.

By following a logical process of needs assessment, planning, acquisition and implementation of targeted solutions, organizations can achieve physicians participation in IS and improve the level of physician satisfaction and utilization of clinical IS. In turn, one can more effectively negotiate the executive culture that decides the fate of HIT issues, and leverage the decisions that focus on providing high-quality healthcare to patients. This will mitigate any burdens that might be subsumed from unknowing negligence of the HIT system. Physicians are busy, but with proper organizational structure and support, they can become invaluable participants in the organization's IS process ensuring their clinical needs and priorities are considered. This kind of collaborative participation is critical to the success of a clinical IS project and to improving the physicians' satisfaction and utilization of clinical IS. How these HIT challenges are met will ultimately decide the professional readiness and fiscal impact on the healthcare organization. Technology is not going away. Challenges will continue to present themselves, but physician adoption and executive buy-in are challenges that we all can overcome.

Each month Dr. Steven Deitch, Director of Medical Informatics at Inteck, Inc. will provide you with a new article in a series that describes how hospitals can be ready for new healthcare information technology initiatives.