

Getting Your Health Data Right



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Problem to Solve

If it's tough to sleep at night due to data issues hampering your health care organization, you're not alone. For the second year in a row, "health data and analytics" are the top concern of U.S. health care executives, according to the most recent annual [HCEG Top 10 survey](#).

Specifically, health care executives are concerned about the ability of their organizations to leverage disparate data to manage health and drive individual, provider and payer decisions. They're under enormous pressure to get their data "right" and make it relevant, accessible and useful, but are often hampered by ongoing system and integration challenges.

This was the case at a complex health system, with strategic and operational leaders lacking the data needed to fully understand and improve care delivery and overall organization operations. Data sets across an array of domains – patient experience, quality, finance, operations and administration – were not integrated. Ad hoc attempts to gain enterprise-level data integration were beset by a lack of standards and consistency.

To address the challenges of disparate data and inconsistent process for bringing key data sets together, the system's information technology leaders sought to establish an integrated data platform. The goal: To create a platform consisting of governed data sets from a variety of clinical, administrative and operational domains providing insights for understanding and improving organizational performance. Freed Associates (Freed) was brought aboard to help identify an approach for developing the integrated platform, using its extensive expertise with data integration and management and specific experience with this health system.

Strategy and Tactics

A critical first step for developing an integrated platform includes engaging organizational leaders in understanding and documenting their unique integrated data challenges and needs. Discussions with the health system's key stakeholders engendered trust that clinical and operational needs would be considered in the data integration strategy and not overlooked by technical priorities.

Through these discussions, it became quickly apparent that getting to the organization's desired state of a fully integrated and accessible data repository would take time, resources, and most of all, senior leadership commitment. Thus, Freed partnered with the health system's leaders to identify an impactful initial use case to demonstrate the value of data integration and potentially spur a cavalcade of additional data integration steps.

Freed recommended that the health system automate its internal "scorecard," an at-a-glance snapshot of quality, patient experience, employee engagement and financial and patient access metrics from across the organization. Updated monthly, the scorecard was manually compiled from a variety of disparate sources and did not provide real-time patient-level information. Integrating the information needed to produce the scorecard into a single platform would allow for more frequent publication, drill-downs to actionable information, and free up staff tasked with manually compiling scorecard data for other organizational priorities.

With client input, particularly from within the quality department, Freed began establishing a plan and timeline for automating the health system's scorecard for developing an integrated data platform. Concurrently, Freed documented the current state of the health system's data assets and its potential infrastructure to house integrated data. Additionally, Freed initiated internal working sessions to gather the detailed business requirements to integrate the data domains included in the scorecard.

Results and Conclusion

The leadership and subject matter expertise Freed provided gave the health system a strategy and roadmap for developing and improving an integrated data platform. The health system's senior managers will be able to make future decisions more efficiently and accurately, saving time and money, through the following anticipated data platform benefits:

1. **Creating a standard data repository** – with well-documented governance processes including establishing agreed-upon definitions.
2. **Providing a single source of truth** – giving stakeholders access to a consistent source for multiple types of information related to their service, program or patient population.
3. **Improving data quality and reliability** – no matter how or where it is reported.
4. **Reducing duplication of effort** – when data sets needed to be brought together on a program-by-program basis.
5. **Decreasing data reporting time and effort** – enabling stakeholders to more efficiently report on data within their specific domains.
6. **Reducing time and effort of supporting teams** – improving the performance and productivity of IT and reporting teams.

The greatest value Freed provided to the health system was creating a foundation for developing the integrated platform, engaging key stakeholders, and documenting known processes and key requirements. This allowed for a seamless transition to an internal lead, who would drive work forward to support the health system's goals for monitoring performance and identifying opportunities for ongoing improvement.