

How might we improve the rate of adoption of new technology within the healthcare market?

It is generally known that the healthcare market is a slow adopter of the latest and greatest technology solutions. While technology vendors wish it were different, there are some very sound reasons why healthcare professionals are overly cautious and conservative.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES?

One of the biggest and clearest challenges is the fear of doing patient harm if the technology itself fails to perform as expected. Nurses, physicians and clinicians deal with life-or-death situations and must feel completely secure with the technology they are using.

Like other industries, healthcare also has long-standing, experiential knowledge of vendors failing to meet expectations. The time it takes to review vendors, purchase technology, implement and train, as well as constant maintenance of a completely new technology, weighs heavily on the decision-makers. Word of mouth spreads faster with negative experiences than positive ones, and a new technology that causes undesirable impacts for clinicians will lead to less adoption.

Adopting new technology often means changing workflows, processes and habits in a health system. But changing long-ingrained human behaviors is uncomfortable, and is sometimes more difficult than the vendor, health system and users anticipated.

HOW MIGHT THESE CHALLENGES BE MITIGATED?

With some new technology, only rigorous testing and incremental deployments (pilots) can prove a solution to be safe and sound. However, once a new technology has been deployed successfully on enterprise levels, trials become unnecessary. Reference calls or on-site visits can be set up with health systems currently using the new technology. Seeing it in action and hearing how it works from nurses, physicians and clinicians on the front line can help increase adoption.

Technology vendors will want to provide “champion” training to power users and will need the health system to include their best employees in this training. By training employees who are the most open to new technology, who can train others, and promote positive attitudes can make an enormous difference in how the new technology is viewed and adopted.

Better upfront planning and understanding of both the clinical and technical aspects of an implementation are critical to a successful project. Having the right project team both on the health system and vendor sides will provide better understanding and lead to fewer misses in the project. No project is immune from glitches but keeping them to a minimum can also help adoption rates.

Health systems can also include in contracts financial protections or other penalties against vendors who fail to successfully deliver. Vendors want their technology to be successfully implemented and adopted and will work hard to make sure projects do not reach this level.

Existing practices, procedures and methods cannot be magically changed overnight. Much like other critical communications environments like fire, police and air traffic control, clinical collaboration platforms require education to be successful and highly adopted.

