



Making HIPAA Compliance Work for You

“HIPAA REMEDIATION DEADLINES seem to eliminate any real choice between tactical solutions and strategic improvements in the IS environment.”¹ Unfortunately, this is the view of many healthcare providers that are scrambling to meet mandates in today’s maze of systems, trading partners and financial pressures. After helping healthcare organizations on both sides of the HIPAA/EDI frenzy, Pervasive is ready to help you turn a mandatory tactical project into a strategic advantage, reducing fragmentation and extending the benefits of standards into both clinical and financial improvements.

HIPAA transactions and HIPAA privacy requirements imply a level of integration that is beyond standard practices in health systems today. And as external pressures force more and more standards on you, you begin to wonder if there are any benefits to the tactical crush on IT – or if there ever will be any.

HIPAA regulations are forcing standardization at pivotal points in information flows throughout the healthcare industry, while protected health information must be private and open to audits at any time. The ripple effects of these imperatives are difficult to calculate. However, in any assessment they will force a new view of operational systems that cross the traditional boundaries of existing systems and business processes.

Over the past ten years, systems and processes have straddled the schism between the need to understand costs and the pressure to measure and improve the quality of care. At the same time, these systems and processes have created an informational concoction of client-server systems, mainframes and batch processes to supplement a new generation of high-powered desktops and an explosion of portable intelligent devices.

In a sweeping analysis of systems architectures that are likely to be successful beyond HIPAA, research and advisory firm Gartner suggests that both strategic frameworks and operational effectiveness will depend on integration in a variety of forms. At the same time, they issue a warning: “The growing use of messaging, database gateways, Web integration servers and other real-time, transaction-at-a-time middleware mechanisms . . . can actually worsen the cost

and complexity of the overall solution unless implementation follows a managed approach.”²

For the first time in recent history, the solution will not appear in a multi-million-dollar buy-and-replace pattern. HIPAA’s ripple effect can act as a catalyst to begin a strategy that grows with incremental tactical successes. Instead of buying a big system this time, healthcare will join other information intensive industries and begin to consider integration as a center of competency rather than a system that an enterprise evaluates, buys and installs. There are no “select, set and forget” solutions.

Moving from Tactical Pressure to Strategic Success

The lack of standards in storing health information in clinical and hospital systems leaves each health system with a highly personalized array of technology. Today, legal and financial swords become crossed if information systems can’t talk to one another and deliver coherent views of business processes that no longer fit into neat transaction-based systems. With depleted IT budgets, buy-and-replace is no longer an option. We are entering an era of extend-and-enhance that will retain the value of existing systems through an undetermined period of financial healing. The healthcare information technology market will move back to basics.

“Good architecture dictates centralizing functions that require intensive administration and creating opportunities to reuse solutions.”³ The question is, how does an IT environment centralize the integration that must occur

STRENGTHS:

- Turn HIPAA initiatives into a strategic advantage
- Integration can benefit clinical and financial systems now and in the future
- Methods to reuse HIPAA integration solutions

ADDED BENEFITS:

- HIPAA regulations are forcing standardization at pivotal points in information flows throughout the healthcare industry, while protected health information must be private and open to audits at any time.
- HIPAA transactions and HIPAA privacy requirements are generating the need for a higher level of integration than ever before.
- HIPAA can be a starting point for creating an integration plan that spans point-specific issues in HIPAA transaction sets and extends into operational adjustments to build health summaries or assist in data aggregation chores for quality or utilization reviews

simultaneously at different layers, between different systems and in response to different business needs? The answer is a mix of good development and deployment processes and an overall approach that leaves you, the customer, in control instead of your IT vendor.

Each vendor that offers an integration layer as a “part of” their solution offers integration in a biased manner. Sometimes the bias is subtle – perhaps in the form of tuning and efficiency features – while other times it is more overt – such as proprietary copyrighted data models that serve as centers of integration transformations. Consequently, the role of a universal, or “distributed,” integration layer that remains agnostic and cooperative to all end-point systems, databases and processes is emerging as a practical response to today’s complex integration environment.

A best practice approach concentrates on the reuse of integration components such as data maps and validation processes, as well as consistency in documentation and testing of each integration task. Unlike other approaches, this integration approach does not arbitrarily force integration onto the Web or into a messaging layer, or complain about COBOL copybooks or homegrown data models. As tactical issues are addressed, each integration effort builds on an inventory of reusable “half maps” that assist any future effort that might include each data source or target.

Consistency of this integration approach leads to increased competency, enabling validation processes to reduce submission errors or incomplete record passing by adding operational logic to business processes that do not fit into end-point systems. Offloading business logic into a well-documented integration process prevents vendor entanglements, shortens deployment cycles and leaves process control in the hands of local decision makers instead of remote product planners. As competency grows, workflow designs become graphical models that bridge the communication gaps between systems administrators and domain experts. Specifications and deployment maps are automatically synchronized with operational reality.

HIPAA as a Starting Point

Traditional buy-and-replace patterns are costly and time consuming but will continue to have a place in major systems overhauls. In the meantime, tactical tools-based integration can be executed as a stepping stone to building a solid strategy in a competency center. Since HIPAA regulations will touch accounting systems, billing systems, medical records, data warehouses and point-of-care systems, a consistent approach to integration will yield benefits immediately in tuning and troubleshooting. Total cost of ownership evaluations place supreme value on “mean time to implementation” and “mean time to repair,” signaling rapid, flexible integration solutions. As we witness the flurry of integration acronyms (EAI, ERP, CRM, etc.), the central issue of integration remains the same: Information needs to arrive at a touch point complete, properly composed and in a usable format.

With robust, award-winning tools and development and deployment teams seasoned by two solid years of HIPAA compliance activities, Pervasive Data Junction is ready to take any role in advancing your integration competency. Our tool set can address needs in a supplementary role or at the edges of your current networked environment. We have also won worldwide technology bids to tie hundreds of sites in dozens of countries into one global operation.

The Pervasive Data Junction healthcare offerings include point-specific issues in HIPAA transaction sets and extend into operational adjustments to build health summaries or assist in data aggregation chores for quality or utilization reviews. In all aspects, Pervasive Data Junction maintains technology neutrality and delivers high-value components that are appropriate for any level of complexity and transaction volume.

For more information on building a competency center by fixing one project at a time, contact your Pervasive Data Junction healthcare representative at 1.800.287.4383.

- 1 W. Rishel, N. Frey, “Architectures for HIPAA Compliance (R-17-7076)” *Gartner Group (Sept. 26, 2002): 19.*
- 2 Rishel, Frey, 17.
- 3 Rishel, Frey, 9.

ABOUT PERVASIVE SOFTWARE



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