



Shifting Your Analytics Strategy to Keep up with Modern Healthcare

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Introduction

Actionable business intelligence is a critical tool for healthcare providers and insurance companies engaged in the value-based care environment. Yet many organizations still lack the ability to analyze data quickly, comprehensively, and effectively.

Embedded analytics tools that deliver self-service reporting capabilities can reduce barriers to success in a risk-based financial landscape.

For health insurance companies and healthcare providers, success with value-based care is founded upon one key competency: the ability to access data-driven insights that will enable stakeholders to cut costs, trim inefficiencies, and create targeted quality improvement programs.

Historically, insurance companies and providers have faced significant challenges when trying to share claims data, clinical information, pharmacy data, lab results, and patient-generated health data that is complete, accurate, and updated in real-time.

On the one hand, data siloes and interoperability issues limit data access by restricting the movement of datasets between value-based purchasing partners. Payers often generate one view of patients, while providers rely upon a slightly different perspective of individuals and populations, leaving both entities with a fragmented portrait of utilization, costs, and outcomes.

On the other hand, data insights are a hard to generate because healthcare providers can sometimes be flooded with huge volumes of data that are not tailored to their decision-making needs. This can overwhelm clinicians and limit the usefulness of health information.

“In healthcare, it often feels like there is just too much data,” says Maire Newton, Data Analyst, Professional Services at Looker.

“There are millions of claims coming into the payer environment, and millions of clinical notes, lab results, and patient-generated data points pouring into the clinical side. It is often very difficult to analyze all of it efficiently without the right business intelligence tools.”

Finding the balance between data access and insight requires an investment in self-service analytics technologies that reduce wait times, increase options for customization, and help to embed tailored reporting into the process of delivering value-based healthcare.

Benefits of Embedding Data Analytics

The healthcare industry is fast-paced and must run lean, especially since value-based reimbursement brings an element of financial risk to many organizations. Decision makers cannot afford to wait for business intelligence reports.

As the nature of business changes rapidly, providers and executive leaders are increasingly expressing a desire to access and seek out the data on their own.

“If organizations set up a reporting environment where everything is very static and controlled by just a few people, it will create a bottleneck that can reduce productivity and limit insights.”

These “data breadlines” form when only a small number of people in the organization are familiar with how to run queries. However, organizations can no longer afford to rely on legacy systems that require a dedicated team of support analysts to generate reports.

No matter what the industry, self-service data is now an expectation.

In an environment as complex as the healthcare industry, clinicians and leaders must be able to explore relevant data in order to identify opportunities and act upon them swiftly.

This relevant data is best provided by embedding a self-service analytics solution into a portal where everyone can see the same version of a patient's history or any other shareable data. This solution provides users with the ability to securely give employees, providers, and other business partners access to trustworthy data to make real-time, data-driven decisions.

Self-service analytics tools remove unnecessary barriers to accessing the insights required for value-based care. Embedding business intelligence capabilities can also streamline the process of sharing data out to partners and clients, which encourages collaboration and proactive patient management.

"If payers and providers are going to succeed with value-based care, they have to collaborate," Newton stresses. "Sharing risk requires both parties to have a complete understanding of the populations involved and the degree of investment they can expect to meet quality benchmarks and achieve shared savings or incentive payments."

Strategies for Successfully Deploying Business Intelligence Tools

A truly impactful self-service data analytics deployment combines robust security with clear objectives and business goals. Both providers and payers should develop analytics initiatives that prioritize streamlined access to data while preparing for future growth.

Begin with a high-value use case

Healthcare organizations rarely have the resources or budget to address every single business problem all at once, and should instead focus on choosing a few high-value use cases that will provide maximum impact while providing proof-of-concept for future work and ongoing development.

Quality benchmarking and performance reporting is an ideal place to start bringing more data into the decision-making process. If organizations can flag unusually high costs or unexpectedly low outcomes in a particular area, they can quickly cut spending and increase productivity to see fast return on their investment.

Segment data to be relevant to the organization's most pressing needs

Healthcare organizations need to have large data sets available to chart progress over time and monitor entire populations, but they may not require instant access to all the data generated over the past ten or fifteen years. Unless a provider is undergoing a very comprehensive audit, chances are they will only need data from the past two to three years on a regular basis.

Providers should segment their "warm data" from their historical data assets and focus on providing speedy access to information generated more recently. This will allow users to immediately answer their clinical, administrative, and financial questions without overburdening the analytics infrastructure.

Prioritize patient privacy and data security

In the age of large-scale data breaches and ransomware, privacy and security are paramount when patient data is involved.

Whether a data warehouse is on premise or based in the cloud, security measures including two-factor authentication and role-based data access controls can limit the activities of unauthorized parties. The key is to find a way to ensure security and provide self-service analytics to the parties who need it.

Ensure standardized data definitions across the organization

Complex healthcare data can be interpreted in many different ways, which makes it important for organizations to agree upon the fundamental definitions of metrics and data points before moving into analysis.

That is the key to data democratization: to make the data freely available with definitions that are locked down so that organizations don't have a dozen different workbooks where the data is saying something different in each one.

Organizations can overcome these challenges with a tool like Looker, which has a modeling language that allows an analyst to work with customers to come up with a centralized definition for the data. As a result, no matter what someone does as they explore the dataset, they are seeing the same thing that everyone else is seeing.

Prepare for long-term growth with flexible architecture

Business intelligence helps organizations grow financially and clinically – and data analytics infrastructure must be flexible enough to expand accordingly. On-demand massively parallel processing databases (MPPs) can dynamically scale alongside the organization's needs, keeping wait times low and leveraging the full capabilities of modern, powerful data warehousing tools without overpaying for unused hardware.

Conclusion

Embedding self-service data analytics into the decision making workflows can enable payers and providers to collaborate efficiently and effectively in the era of value-based care.

Access to robust, meaningful reporting tools when and where they are needed can support a variety of critical activities, such as clinical decision-making and reducing inefficiencies, which will allow organizations to achieve their quality and financial goals.

Choosing a business intelligence tool that incorporates all of the strategies for successfully deploying self-service analytics to all decision makers, will lead to a data-driven environment where better decisions are made.

At the end of the day, health insurance companies and healthcare providers need to be profitable. Choosing a tool like Looker, which enables self-service embedded data analytics, is the best way to ensure long-term success.

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Learn more at: <https://looker.com>

