



## Health Care Strategy Insights: Organizational Data Strategies

***About the authors:** Sarah Wiley, Morgann Carlon, and Justine O’Neill are leaders within Deloitte’s Health Care Strategy & Analytics practice. This editorial represents their perspective on how health care leaders should navigate developing an effective data strategy for their organizations.*

Health care organizations generate vast troves of data (health care industry data generation grew by over 11,000% from 2013 to 2020<sup>1</sup>) but often underutilize their data assets. Organizational data can be used to drive insights around clinical outcomes, quality, and operational performance, and to frame and enable robust, evidence-driven strategies. As the availability of data storage, processing, and application tools and techniques continues to expand, health care CSOs must make leveraging their data assets a strategic imperative.

Many health care organizations have begun to experiment around how to use their data. While certain organizations have launched partnerships with technology start-ups and/or hyperscalers in an effort to mutually benefit from combined expertise, others have invested in their own internal capabilities. Organizations, however, have not always seen tangible outcomes and results from these ventures, thus demonstrating the need for health care leaders to separate the “noise” from those opportunities that can provide true value and impact. Health Care CSOs and their executive colleagues will play a critical role in identifying those real opportunities and determining their organization’s best path to success in utilizing their data.

## The Unique Challenges Health Care Organizations Face

Health care lags other industries in leveraging data due to the unique challenges that organizations face when implementing and applying “big data” tools. Firstly, clinical decision-making is complex – decisions are not binary and involve multiple factors and considerations. Secondly, there is no clear and obvious solution that health care organizations can employ. The market is saturated with new tools/software and thought leadership is constantly shifting the industry perspective on what types of solutions are the most important or advantageous. Finally, in addition to having to understand and make choices among multitudes of vendor options, CSOs must also ensure that any tools that they use provide robust protection of patient health information and comply with evolving health care data laws.<sup>2</sup> The combination of these unique industry considerations adds extra layers of complexity for health care organizations as they design their data strategies.

## Data as a Core Competency of Organizational Strategy

As data strategy continues to increase in complexity and importance, health care CSOs need to pivot their approach and recognize data as a cornerstone of their enterprise strategy. CSOs should consider several factors when crafting their data strategy:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** As data strategy becomes a central pillar of the enterprise, a broad range of clinical, administrative, partner, and vendor stakeholders should be included in the development and articulation of the strategy. Engaging clinical staff, finance/accounting, marketing, product/program design, administration, and senior leadership will help to build support for the ultimate strategy and ensure that the strategy incorporates the combined expertise from across all of the domains within the organization. While crafting the data strategy, it is also critical to create change management and stakeholder engagement plans to support all the various stakeholders who are needed to execute the strategy. Organizations can also collaborate with partners and vendors from the beginning to “jump-start” their data strategy journey and leverage deep technical expertise.<sup>3</sup>
- **Aligning Data Strategy to Enterprise Objectives:** CSOs should work with executives and frontline staff to utilize available datasets to drive progress against enterprise and division objectives. Funding and resources should be allocated to the curation and manipulation of data to drive specific strategic goals (e.g., accelerate predictive analytics or monitor social determinants of health).
- **Data Enablement:** CSOs should determine whether their organization’s data goals are best achieved through buying systems, partnering with vendors, or building out organization-specific data capabilities. Build, buy, or partner decisions will largely depend on the organization’s existing resources and capabilities and should consider whether the desired capability will serve as a key differentiator for the organization in the future.

## Looking Forward

As health care becomes increasingly reliant on data to deliver care and drive enterprise decision-making, organizations should seize the opportunity to transform their relationship with data. Health care organizations are uniquely positioned to curate, leverage, and monetize the large data assets that are inherent in their organization. To drive continued market success, CSOs should take action now to assess their current data strategy and define the future role of data as a core component in their organizational strategies.

Read more about Deloitte's point-of-view on health care data strategy in this [article](#) co-authored by Deloitte and the Wall Street Journal.

*Please reach out to Sarah, Morgann, or Justine with any questions.*



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