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Undeniable Truths of Interface Management

A comprehensive guide to
building, testing, and monitoring
your interfaces and handling
multiple interface projects

9 Undeniable Truths of Interface Management

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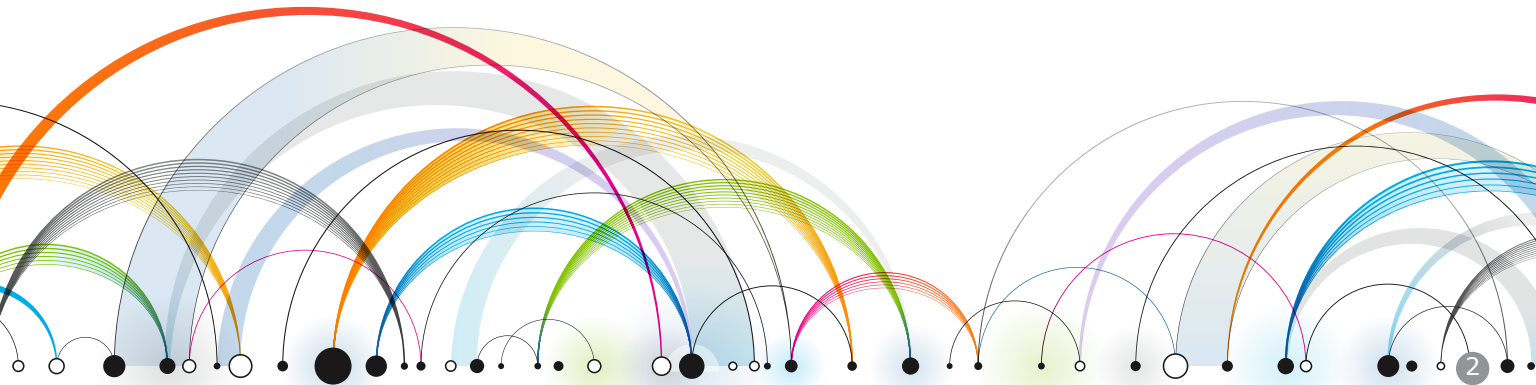
Introduction

Interfaces are vital to the delivery of high quality patient care because they bring critical data to the point of care. The need for new interfaces — and enhancements to existing ones — continues to grow due to a number of converging factors in healthcare. These include:

- Government mandates such as Meaningful Use — and the related financial incentives
- The need to join state and regional Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) and evolving reimbursement models such as Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs)
- Pressures to save time, reduce errors, improve decision making, control costs
- Constantly evolving clinical workflows and standards
- The commitment of healthcare providers to constantly improve patient care

For this exchange of data to be truly effective, the flow from one system to another should be virtually invisible to end users. To achieve this invisibility, an interface must extract the right data from one system and map it to a workflow in another system that is often structured very differently.

CIOs and IT management are challenged with finding the best strategy for handling the complex and time-consuming process of building and managing interfaces. This eBook covers nine proven factors for building an interface and integration strategy that can work for your healthcare organization.



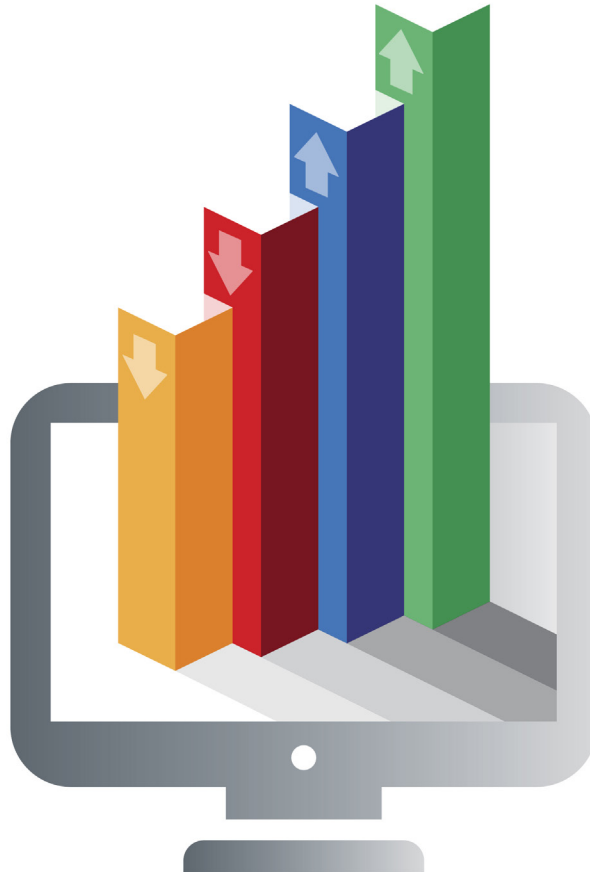
Truth

1

Solid interfaces are critical for patient care

When interfaces work properly your healthcare organization and its caregivers experience these dramatic benefits.

- **Reduced medical errors**
- **Reduction of redundant data entry**
- **Faster diagnoses**
- **More complete patient records**



Truth

2

If interfaces aren't working, the consequences are high

When interfaces go down and systems stop talking to each other, caregivers cannot quickly access vital patient clinical data. This results in:

- **Increased risk to patients**
- **Irate physicians and caregivers**
- **Bad publicity**
- **Lost time**
- **Non-compliance bringing fines and penalties**

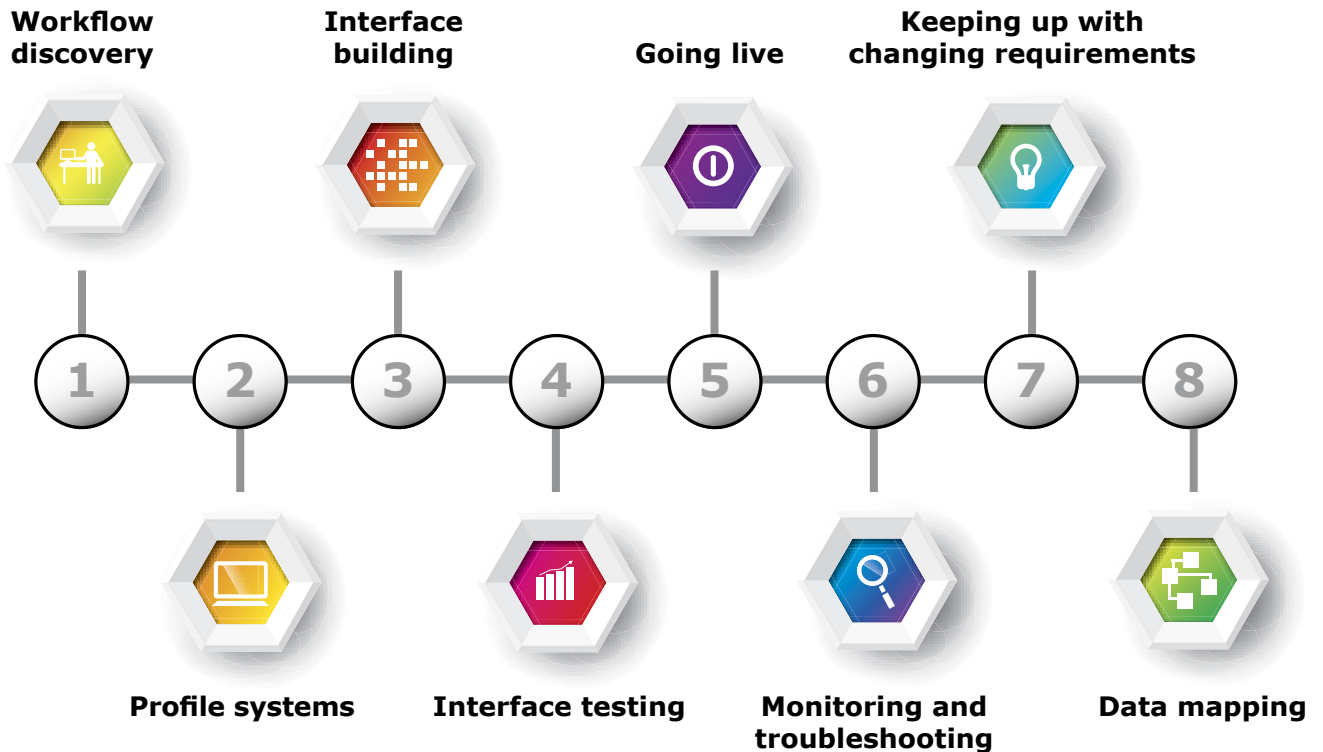


Truth

3

Effective interface projects require eight steps.

It's difficult work to implement interfaces and keep them running because each system is designed with unique data schemas and workflows. While every project varies, there are key steps in bringing an interface to life and keeping it there.



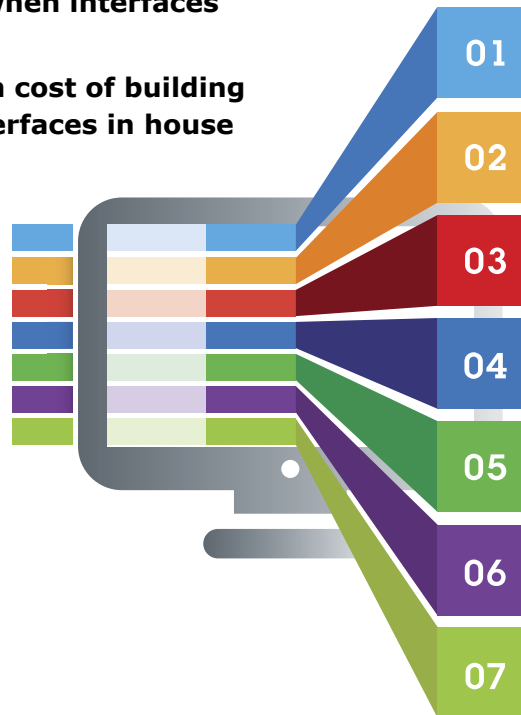
Truth

4

Effective interface projects face seven challenges.

When building your interface strategy, consider your staff's ability to meet these 7 major challenges:

- 1. Overcoming barriers between disparate systems**
- 2. Educating staff on how to effectively build interfaces or how to use an interface engine to build them**
- 3. Falling behind on other critical IT projects because of increased workload**
- 4. Having the time to build and manage multiple interfaces at the same time**
- 5. Being available 24/7 to respond to technical emergencies**
- 6. Managing the high risks to patients and your facility when interfaces stop working**
- 7. Justifying the high cost of building and managing interfaces in house**



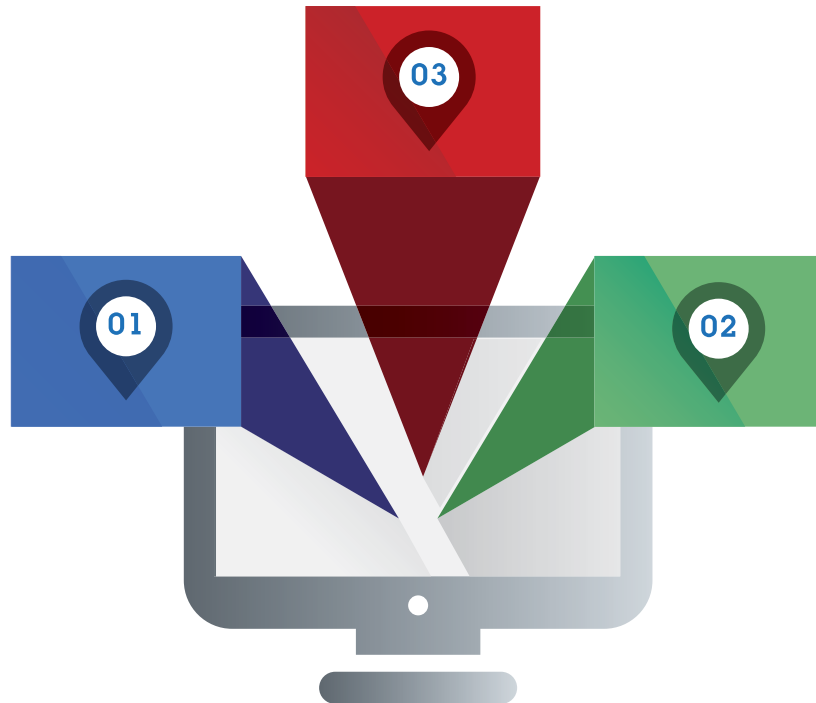
Truth

5

There are multiple options for implementing interface strategies.

Healthcare organizations may have dozens of interface projects that must all be managed at the same time. Many healthcare IT groups find that they don't have the time or manpower to build and manage the typical interface workload. The CIO and IT Management options include:

- **Performing all interface work for all interface projects in-house**
- **Hiring an interface services provider to manage all interface projects**
- **A combination of the two – manage some in house, and outsource some to the interface services provider**

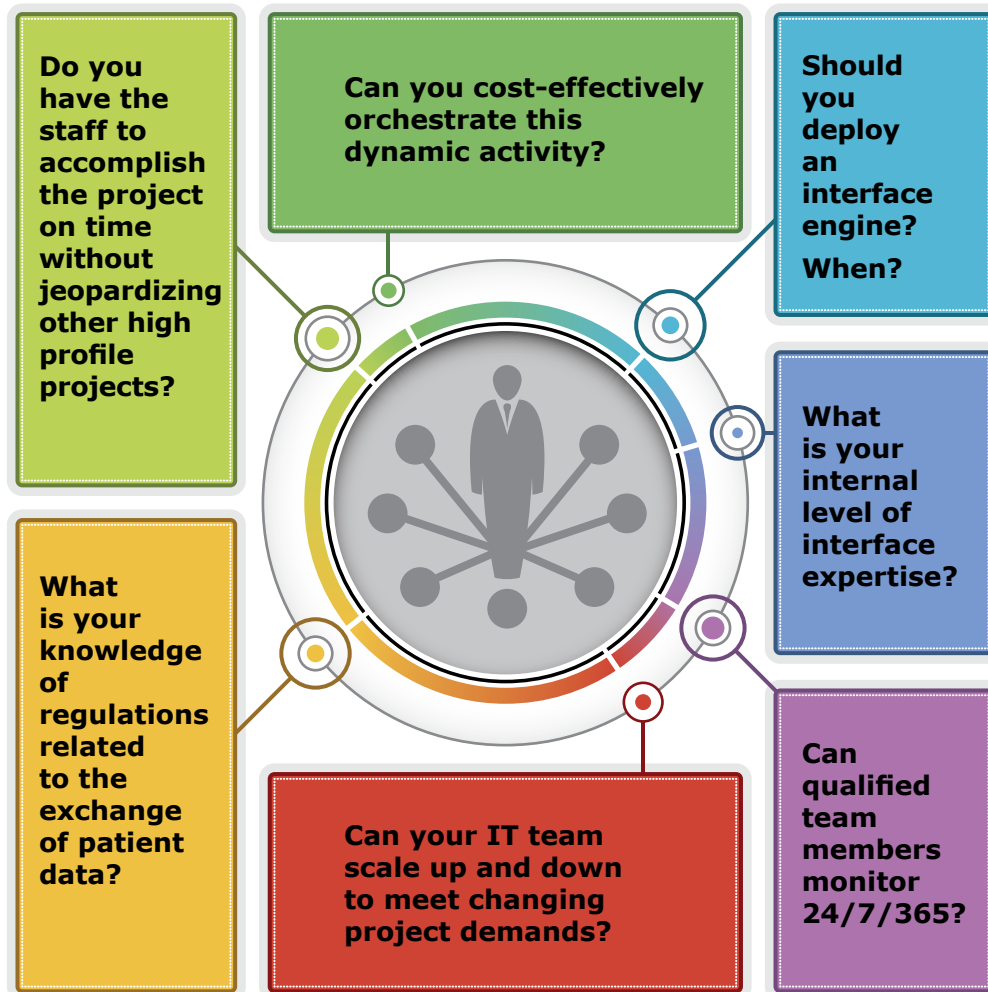


Truth

6

Healthcare IT organizations don't always have the necessary interface capabilities.

When addressing interface management, it's important to analyze your in-house capabilities from many angles by asking these questions:



Interface services providers are a solid alternative to in-house interface management

Hospital CIOs and IT Management partner with an interface services provider for the same reasons one pays a mechanic to repair a car: it's their specialty. They have the tools, the equipment, and the knowledge to do the work quickly and do it right. Interface services providers can take the burden of any or all of these tasks off your shoulders:

- **Handling full project management**
 - Planning
 - Scheduling
 - Budgeting
 - Resource allocation
 - Collaborating with hospital IT staff and business sponsors
 - Engaging with vendors
 - Overseeing development
 - Conducting necessary testing
 - Managing the rollout
 - Providing support
- **Providing technical expertise**
 - Knowing the source and destination systems
 - Having delivered similar interfaces
 - Are familiar with data structures and vocabulary
 - Understanding the interface(s) intended benefits
- **Leveraging existing relationships with Health Systems Vendors**
- **Maintaining interface best practices**
 - Mapping processes and workflows
 - Managing change
 - Managing vendor relationships
 - Utilizing HL7 standards and updates
 - Managing interface documentation
- **Accessing specialized tools**
 - Testing tools
 - Utilizing tools for pro-active alerting and monitoring
- **Providing flexible support options**
 - Managing all interface functions, while IT staff uses engine dashboard to monitor development after go live
 - Managing some interfaces while the hospital manages others
 - Collaborative approach with as little or as much oversight
 - Being flexible to the organization's needs



Truth

8

Working with an interface services provider delivers many benefits.

It's essential for healthcare IT organizations to be strategic. Tying up resources to handle building and managing interfaces is not a cost-effective use of in-house IT talent. Tapping the expertise of an outside interface services provider brings many benefits:

- **Increase staff productivity**
- **Shorten implementation timelines**
- **Achieve higher quality deployments**
- **Reduce the risk of interface and project failure**
- **Rest easy, even on holidays, with dependable 24/7/365 support**



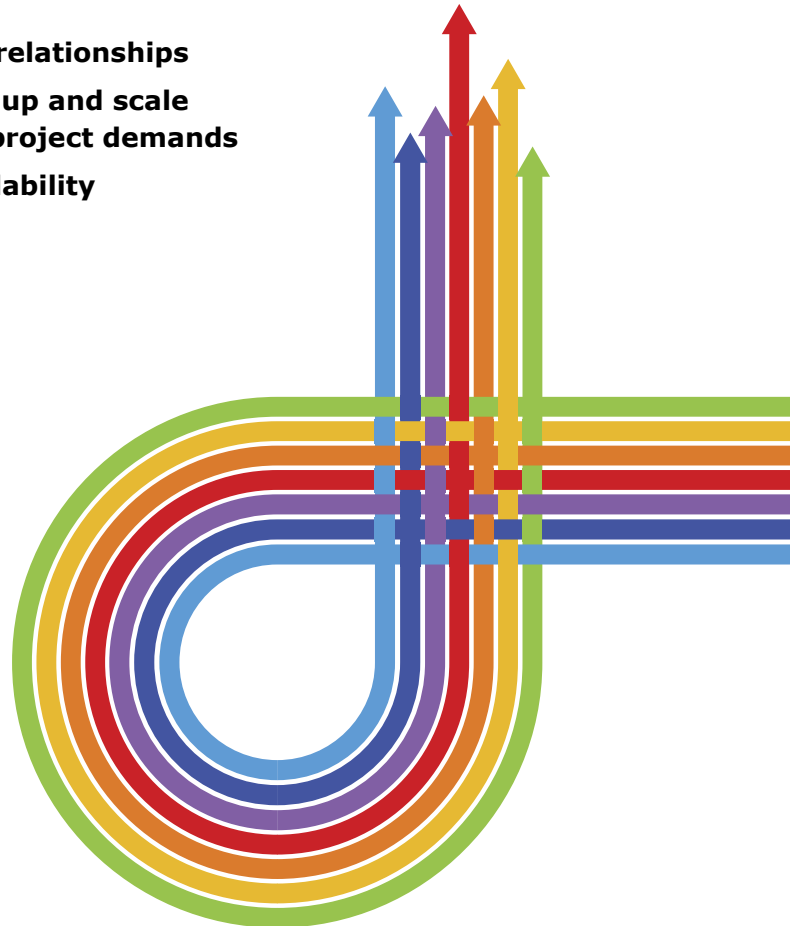
Truth

9

Capable interface services providers must meet seven criteria.

Technical expertise is only part of the equation for selecting an interface services provider. Achieving the excellence needed to accomplish interface management that is truly invisible also requires these considerations:

- 1. Technical competence**
- 2. Knowledge of regulations**
- 3. Clinical knowledge**
- 4. Track record**
- 5. Strong vendor relationships**
- 6. Ability to scale up and scale down to meet project demands**
- 7. 24/7/365 availability**



Conclusion

Many healthcare organizations purchase an interface engine expecting to be able to easily build and manage their own interfaces.

While interface engines do deliver substantial capabilities, the process is considerably longer, more complex, and more costly than originally forecast. Even with an engine, the management and maintenance of interfaces becomes too time-consuming for the organization's IT staff to handle alone.

Reaching out to an interface services provider for all or some of your interface management or custom integration project needs, regardless of what interface engine technology you have in place, is a smart and cost-effective alternative.

For more information on Iatric Systems Interface Services contact us today:



Integration is Everything

27 Great Pond Drive, Boxford, MA 01921 978-805-4100

info@iatric.com iatric.com