

**When your In-House Multi-State  
Data Process is failing you,  
why switching to an outside partner  
is the right move.**

**A STRATASAN SUCCESS STORY**

# Despite Potential Challenges, Switching to an Outside Analytics Partner Is **Worth the Effort.**



After years of gathering and analyzing data using an in-house system, it may seem like too daunting a process to switch to an outside analytics partner. There are many issues you will likely consider, such as the challenges that could come with training your team on a new process. You may have to overcome hurdles as you learn the ins and outs of working with an external partner.

Conversely, there are also risks to consider if you opt to keep things the same. Sticking with the status quo could lead to investments in costly service-line developments that are not equipped for success, ill-informed marketing outreach, and growth planning initiatives that are poorly executed.

In particular, a multi-state hospital system has many compelling reasons to make the move to an outside data analytics partner. In 2015, MHS\* did just that. In this paper, we discuss the issues they were facing before making the switch and why, in the end, it was a profitable and worthwhile move.

\*To keep the identity of this system private, we will be referring to them as MHS throughout this story.

## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

MHS faced the enormous challenge of needing to combine and analyze quarterly data sets created by eight hospitals in three states. Central to their problem was how hospitals in each state report their data differently. Variances from state to state can include:



Different release schedules



Varying code formats: decimal vs. non-decimal, or FIPS codes vs. state-specific codes



Different data formats: flat files, .csv, etc.

The in-house system that MHS used was incapable of accurately reformatting and curating the reported data so that it could be understood as one seamless data set. This frequently led to errors in the data which caused system-wide reports to be unreliable.

Instead of remaining stuck in this data quagmire, the MHS strategic planning team initiated a search for a data intelligence partner who could help them focus more on achieving their mission of providing the best healthcare possible. They needed a partner who could give them the necessary data-collection tools and help them develop a process to properly handle and analyze their multi-state data.

## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

**Three essential needs fueled MHS's motivation to find an outside data intelligence partner:**

**1**

MHS needed **a comprehensive set of tools** that could effortlessly handle multiple state's data sets and meet the needs of a range of users.

**2**

MHS needed **a data process they could trust** so that their strategic growth decisions would no longer be based upon inaccurate data sets.

**3**

MHS needed **a trustworthy outside partner** who could objectively process and analyze their data so their internal team, as the true market experts, could be free to focus on big-picture growth strategy decisions.





## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

**After some research and searching, MHS made the decision to partner with Stratasan based on how well Stratasan was positioned to address their three main needs:**

**1**

**A comprehensive set of tools:**

Stratasan's analytics platform is capable of seamlessly processing multiple state data sets in ways that meet the needs of users at every level of the organization.

**2**

**A data process they could trust:**

Stratasan's data processing is out of sight and out of mind for the client. It functions behind the scenes to properly verify and accurately map raw, multi-state data, while also translating codes into easy-to-query descriptions, thus creating a unified data set that is ready for analysis.

**3**

**A trustworthy outside partner:**

Founded as a technology company, Stratasan builds its software in house, enabling customization and fast response times to market changes. We treat our customers as partners, recognizing them as local experts because of their proximity and personal investment in the area. We prefer to allow for flexibility in our service offerings so partners can get the help they need while freeing up internal resources so teams can focus on big-picture decision-making and growth strategies.



## The Stratasan Analytics Platform is designed with three users in mind:



A data-savvy **super analyst**.



An **intermediate analyst** desiring quick access to intelligence.



**Administrative users** who need immediate access to up-to-date intelligence without the complexity of report building.



## For the data-savvy super user

Stratasan's [Blackbird](#) application provides unrestricted access to well-organized, curated, multi-state data sets.

The screenshot shows the Stratasan Blackbird application interface. At the top, there are navigation links: Gallery, Canvas, Blackbird, Pathways, Tony Camarata, and a dropdown menu. Below the header, there are three main sections: 'Columns' (listing Discharge Quarter And Year, State Facility Id, Admission Source, Patient Zip Code, Payer, and Count), 'Timeline Filter' (set to include the 12 most recent quarters ending in 2016Q2), and 'Filters' (set to exclude DRG 795). The interface includes buttons for ADD COLUMN, TOGGLE GROUPING, ADD COUNT, ADD TIMELINE FILTER, ADD CROSSWALK, and ADD FILTER, along with SAVE and REMOVE buttons.

This makes it possible for MHS to run all of their state data sets at the same time and deliver relevant, enterprise-wide reporting. Blackbird does not limit MHS's analysts to pre-templated reports, antiquated pivot tables, or a predetermined number of rows or columns.

Additionally, Blackbird automates queries, making it easy to get regular data updates. With the capability to consistently pull and review curated, multi-state data queries, MHS's analysts are able to quickly cut through the chaff and get straight to the intelligence they need to analyze.



## For the intermediate analyst

Stratasan's [Canvas](#) application provides easy-to-use and easy-to-understand report templates, taking the hassle out of report building.



This application generates market intelligence based on a curated view of patient age ranges, ZIP codes, market share, cost reporting, and demographics with a few clicks.

Canvas also provides financial insights and market projections for inpatient, outpatient, ED, and physician office volume.



## For MHS's service line leaders, executives, and growth stakeholders

Stratasan's [Gallery](#) application provides an online portal to data intelligence and real-time reports.

Market share reports and custom queries are automatically updated as new data is released. This online portal provides a one-stop destination for every team to access up-to-date reporting and ensures that all stakeholders are aligned around the same information.



### **Sean Conway: National VP, Sales**

If you need help improving your strategic growth planning and data analytics strategy, request a call with [Sean Conway](#).

## A DATA PROCESS YOU CAN TRUST



**Analytics can only be trusted when the underlying data is understandable, clean, well organized, and well curated.**

Unfortunately, the viability of MHS's multi-state data set—and therefore the analysis that was performed based on their data—was questionable.

One of the biggest difficulties MHS experienced before partnering with Stratasan was that their calculated market share changed significantly each quarter for no apparent reason. Stratasan's data experts discovered the underlying problem was that MHS's manual system crosswalked ZIP code data into county data using a geocentric model that produced inaccurate results.

**On the contrary, Stratasan's approach uses a population-centric model that produces accurate market share results, even across state lines.**

Stratasan believes that hospitals shouldn't spend time worrying about whether they've processed ZIP code data correctly or incorrectly. The data should be effortlessly accurate so that organization-wide alignment can be reached around the right initiatives that will most effectively benefit each service area and allow every department to focus more on providing the best healthcare possible. Since their partnership with Stratasan, when new data comes in each quarter, MHS doesn't have to transfer it to another platform to scrub it. They can trust that their data is accurate and instantly ready for comprehensive analysis.

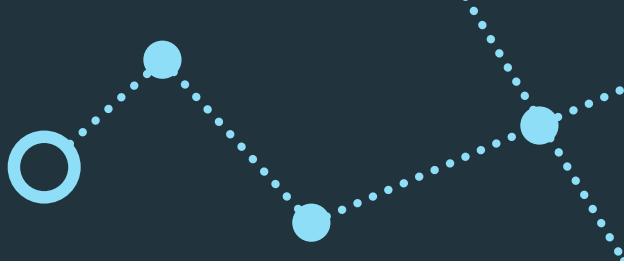
## A TRUSTWORTHY PARTNERSHIP

### MHS was able to test Stratasan's capabilities.

MHS was able to test Stratasan's capabilities prior to switching when they hired Stratasan to conduct several large strategic market analysis projects (SMAs) for each of their eight hospitals. The SMAs provided an overall measure of each hospital's performance, as well as a consideration of their competition's health and growth potential. The resulting reports allowed their strategic planners to better and more deeply understand their market so they could maximize the impact of their growth efforts and increase the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Based on the experience they had with the SMA development and the results they received, MHS knew that Stratasan was a partner who could perform the heavy lift of data processing and objective data analysis so that their internal team could focus on bigger-picture growth strategy decisions.





## BUSINESS IMPACT

### The decision to switch from their in-house system to Stratasan.

The decision to switch from their in-house system to Stratasan has yielded a wide range of benefits for MHS. Having an outside data analytics partner who understands the complexities of multi-state data gathering and curation has led to significantly fewer data errors. It has also led to a higher level of focus and efficiency for MHS's internal team.

Instead of regularly spinning their wheels scrubbing raw data, they can simply insert clean, standardized, multi-state data into templated reports and receive analyses that are useful for future expansion and growth planning. All of this has resulted in tremendous time (and therefore financial) savings quarter over quarter, and more effective strategic planning.

Moreover, now that they have moved away from a siloed data approach and have embraced a centralized, multi-state approach, MHS can more quickly and easily locate problem areas within their hospital system and address them right away. This newfound ability has lead to improved organizational alignment around how change should be implemented and has enabled focus on efficacious initiatives and long-term goals.

## MHS IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

### At Stratasan, we understand the concerns.

At Stratasan, we understand the concerns around transitioning from an in-house system to an outside market analytics partner. We see how it could be perceived as a complicated and overbearing process.

Below you will find a 60-day timeline that addresses these concerns head on, demonstrating that with proper planning and execution, the transition can be made easily and efficiently, resulting in a better process overall and with little lost time.



**DAY 1**

- Decision made to partner with Stratasan
- BAA signed
- State data use agreement process begins
- MSA exchanged
- Non-binding letter-of-intent signed



**DAY 30**

- State data transfer and uploading begins
- System “go-live”
- Training begins (internal team)



**DAY 45**

- MSA signed
- Training begins (external team)
- State data transfer concludes
- System-wide queries are populated



**DAY 60**

- Full system “go-live”





## THE TAKEAWAY

### Transitioning from an in-house data system to an outside data analytics partner can seem like an arduous undertaking.

If your current system can't properly curate and process multi-state data in a way that supports accurate and effective analysis, then it's time to start considering your options. The risks of sticking with the status quo could mean costly service-line developments that are not equipped for success, ill-informed marketing outreach, and growth planning initiatives that are poorly executed.

In developing this four-part series, we hope to highlight the potential liabilities and pitfalls every hospital and healthcare system could face if matched with the wrong data analytics partner or when trying to manage the complexities of multi-state data alone. The chance for misstep is possible for service providers of every size and offering. With this in mind, we've included in this series stories about the largest sole community provider, a teaching hospital, and [the largest hospital system in the country](#)—all of which have made the choice to switch to Stratasan.

The Stratasan [Analytics Platform](#) provides strategic planners and hospital executives immediate and unrestricted access to healthcare intelligence. With similar players in the market such as Intellimed, Crimson Market Advantage, Sg2, and Truven, we can say with confidence that Stratasan's software suite is the most robust planning software on the market.

## THE TAKEAWAY

Additionally, Stratasan's [Spark Services](#) is a team of seasoned healthcare strategic growth professionals. A diverse team of experts with specialized skills in GIS mapping, health analysis, and data handling, Spark is a complement and extension to any hospital planning team, available on a project-by-project basis or as an ongoing partnership.

For more information on how a partnership with Stratasan can provide the insights you need for strategic growth, request a call with our National VP of Sales, [Sean Conway](#).



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

#### **Lee Ann Lambdin: SVP Strategic Advisory Services**

Lee Ann is responsible for the execution of high-touch, strategic engagements contracted by customers, such as Community Health Needs Assessments or strategic planning engagements. She also serves as the Stratasan brand evangelist and a trusted advisor to internal team members and clients, providing industry expertise and high-level strategic direction.

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