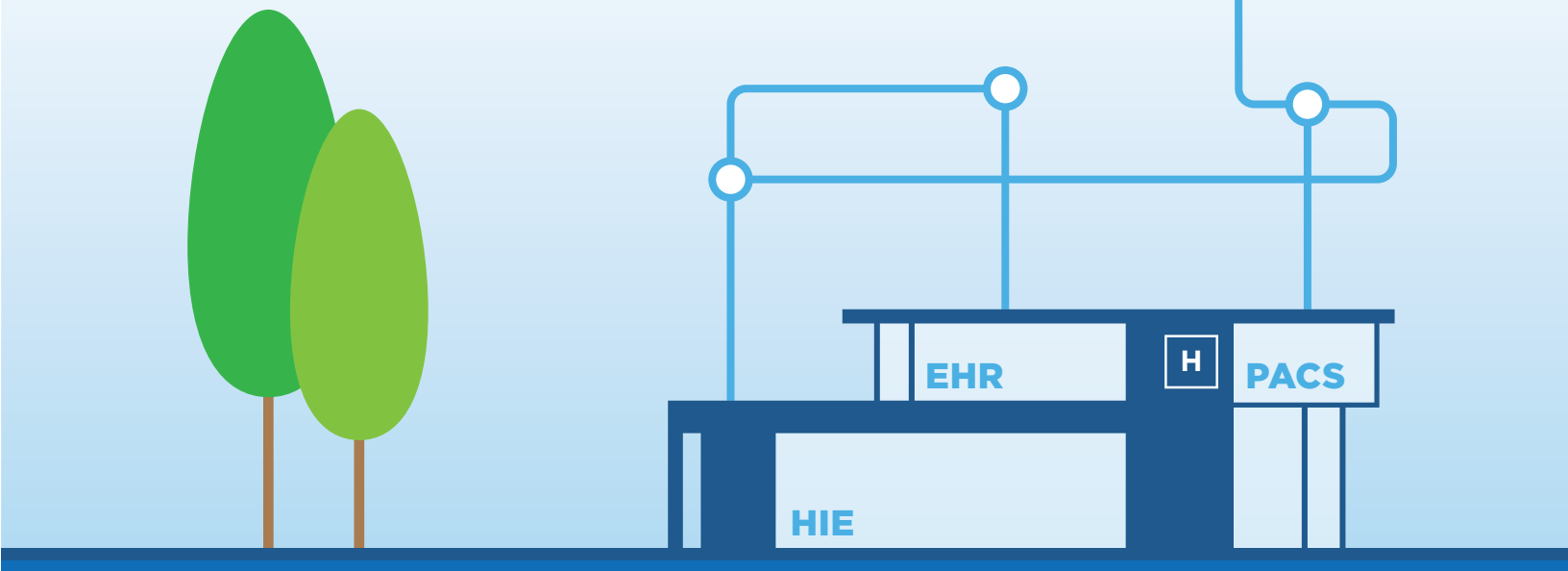
6 REASONS WHY YOU NEED A

MODERN INTEGRATION ENGINE



Leveraging the right technology for interoperability success

There's a lot of frustration and skepticism around interoperability in healthcare. While much of it is warranted, the reality is that the issue of interoperability isn't going anywhere and for good reason too.

When done right, interoperability can transform healthcare by:

- producing better clinical outcomes
- increasing patient engagement
- creating faster, more precise workflows
- supporting healthcare reform initiatives
- and generating a better bottom line

As healthcare IT must be able to do more with much less these days, "doing it right" has to include leveraging the right technology.

For years, healthcare providers and vendors have used HL7 interface engines to exchange data between clinical applications.

But, as the demands of interoperability continue to expand to include a growing number of applications and devices aimed at modernizing healthcare, these legacy interface engines are quickly showing their limitations.

The technology exists to take healthcare to the next level. When it comes to getting useful, actionable data into the hands of decision-makers, it's not surprising to see many healthcare organizations making the switch to a more advanced modern integration engine.

Consider the following 6 reasons to help decide if it's time for your organization to make a change.

1 The need to share information is greater than ever.

The number of information sources in healthcare today is astounding and will only continue to grow.

There's EMRs, HIEs, PACS, billing systems, medical devices, wearables, and the list goes on and on. The point is they ALL need integration.

For the purposes of collaborative care and population health management, the more sources of information, the better. At the same time, it means more data standards and transport protocols for your IT department or implementation team to handle.

> INTEGRATION TIP: *Never tie your strategy to any one standard. A single universal standard to solve all of healthcare's interoperability issues is not going to happen.*

While the lion's share of information exchanged in healthcare is done through HL7 v2 interfaces, things are changing. From complex documents like CCD to web service resources like FHIR, today's diverse range of systems and devices demand a strategy and infrastructure built on flexibility.

Let's say your organization only does HL7 to HL7 integration today. On average, it takes you a few days to build a typical HL7 interface. What happens when your state public health agency requires immunization reporting to be sent via a SOAP-based web interface? How long will it take you to build? Weeks? Months?

With frequent market changes and regulatory pressures, it's easy to see how anchoring your strategy to any one standard can be a costly mistake.

A modern integration engine allows you to treat all standards equally. After all, the value lies within the actual data itself, not the format that it's sent or received in.

2 One integration solution is all you need.

It's quite common, especially in the provider space, for organizations to use multiple integration solutions.

How or why these organizations end up with multiple solutions to solve a single problem varies. In some cases, it's purely a result of function, where one solution is used to handle all of their HL7 integration and an entirely different application is used for web service integration. In other cases, often in larger hospital settings, it's the result of organizational structure, where different departments all use different solutions. It's not abnormal to see clinical, financial and operational departments all using separate applications.

These kind of scenarios are considerably less than ideal. In fact, they are downright wasteful. Your staff training costs, licensing fees, upgrades, maintenance and support contracts are all multiplied.

A modern integration engine, one that is data format agnostic, will help you put an end to this kind of wasteful spending by making sure that you can handle all integration requirements across your entire organization with just one solution.

3

Speed matters when it comes to controlling costs.

One of the most cited barriers to interoperability is cost, which is understandable. The cost associated with building and maintaining interfaces can quickly spiral out of control.

The most effective way for you to control these costs is to build your interfaces faster. Of course, that's easier said than done.

Unlike legacy interface engines, a modern integration engine gives you a single consistent development environment to standardize how you build any type of interface. When you're building all of your interfaces using the same process and reusing modules from previously tested interfaces, there's no doubt you'll build interfaces faster.

> *"Every single interface I have ever built, with any engine, has had a vast amount of customizations and always required some amount of scripting."*
>
> - AN HONEST INTERFACE ENGINEER

Legacy interface engines that use a graphical user interface (GUI) are fine for simple data mappings, but we all know that most integration work isn't that straightforward. When it comes to real-world integration in healthcare, it means data transformations, version translations, and complex processing logic. There is simply no better way to handle these complexities than with scripting.

A modern integration engine is built to handle these complexities. That's why they feature intuitive scripting environments for rapid yet stable interface development.

4 Without reliability, interoperability is impossible.

As obvious of as reason as this sounds, it is surprising how often reliability doesn't receive its due consideration. No discussion about interoperability should be had without mentioning reliability.

Whether the information flow is clinical, financial or operational in nature, unscheduled downtime in any healthcare setting is unacceptable at best. Organizations that use modern integration engines can make honest claims about no unscheduled downtime for years.

Of course, there will be times when something outside of your control takes place that results in downtime. It is critical that you are able to immediately respond to these events to minimize downtime and prevent data loss or corruption.

A modern integration engine minimizes downtime by providing high availability and failover options that are adaptable to your existing IT infrastructure. To prevent data loss and guarantee message delivery, all messages are saved and logged to allow you to quickly and easily resend any missed messages during downtime.

5 You must always be on alert. Always.

Errors happen and they seem to generally happen at the worst times. Alerts and notifications are critical to how you monitor and maintain your interfaces.

Consider the following scenario:

An error occurs that causes an interface to go down. An email or SMS alert should be sent to notify your integration engineer to begin the troubleshooting process. You should be able to set up basic inactivity alerts with most legacy interface engines, but shouldn't your solution actually aid in speeding up the error resolution by pinpointing where the error occurred?

Interface maintenance is more complex than just inactivity alerts. Effectively, you should be able to create an alert for any condition you want. Let's say your lab orders interface hasn't received an order for the last 30 minutes. Instead of waiting until the lab realizes something is wrong, you

should be able to create an alert for your IT team that no orders have been received over a specific time.

The reality of how and where people work has changed and how interfaces are monitored needs to change as well. A central dashboard to monitor all interfaces regardless of their location that can be accessed from any web-enabled device is a must have.

Interface management is just as important as building interfaces when it comes to cost control. A modern integration engine gives you the necessary tools for monitoring and creating alerts to ensure you can quickly identify and resolve any errors, no matter when or where they occur.

6 You can stick with 'best-in-breed' or go with 'best-in-suite'.

As healthcare organizations continue to struggle with piecing together the puzzle of incompatible systems, some are making the switch from a 'best-in-breed' approach to a 'best-in-suite' one.

Traditionally, 'best-of-breed' applications are highly specialized for specific areas such as emergency departments, lab work and supply chain management. In many cases, these systems have been in use for many years because they work very well for their specific area.

There is no "right" approach for healthcare IT and in all likelihood most organizations use some form of hybrid approach. The point is not which approach is better, but to caution against making integration the sole deciding factor.

Replacing your 'best-of-breed' applications can be a costly and disruptive undertaking. The information sharing abilities of many of these older applications are poor at best, so you may be better off to consider replacing your legacy interface engine instead.

A modern integration engine connects legacy applications with the same ease, speed and reliability as it does with more modern applications, allowing your organization to use whichever approach is best suited to your underlying business drivers.

Is it time for you to replace your legacy interface engine?

Talk to us today.

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