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# Healthcare Technology in 2020 and Beyond: Stay Nimble, Adaptable and Demanding

 When peers in the technology industry ask me to predict the future of healthcare, my standard response is to the point: Three years from now, almost nothing that we're doing today in healthcare tech will be the same, so remain nimble and adaptable for what's ahead.

Healthcare innovation itself is proceeding at a dizzying pace, and the technology supporting it has its own built-in realities and challenges. Just like the healthcare industry, healthcare tech is defined by vast amounts of personnel,

financial and federally protected patient data that must be available and transactable 24/7/365. Hospitals, nursing homes, clinical laboratories, emergency departments and hospice companies do not end their workdays at 5 p.m., and the technology that powers them must be always on and functional as well.

What recommendation do I offer for healthcare technology in 2020 and beyond? At VITAS® Healthcare, we're guided by these and other insights and strategies:

Find partners who bring real value to the table and hire them because they possess skills beyond your own organization's capabilities. Expect your partners to be experts and leaders; expect their passion to match yours.

Pay attention to the setting of care. In the hospice profession particularly and in other medical specialties as well, healthcare is gradually moving out of traditional doctor's offices, hospitals and clinics and into locations where it can have the most direct impact—in patient's homes, wherever they call home. VITAS services are provided in patients' private homes, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, therefore our clinical technology systems have become "mobile-first," allowing our hospice clinicians to handle most interactions, orders and record-keeping from their iPhones and iPads.

Insist on security as a guiding principle—not as an afterthought—when collecting, transacting and migrating data. There are no healthcare practices or agencies that want to see their name in the headlines as a result of a malicious attack that exposes private patient data, inhibits patient care, or disrupts operations. Deploy the best-known security and risk management practices, and be intimately aware of the local, state, federal and industry guidelines and laws that govern data and privacy in your profession, sector or specialty.

Ask what you need of vendors and partners, even if it's unique to you and not in the standard contract. When VITAS was searching for cloud-based vendors and technology providers, as

an example, we insisted on and negotiated enterprise-level contract language guaranteeing that VITAS data stored and transferred within the cloud remains geographically within the United States and is never transmitted through or stored in non-US locations. Given current global threats to data security, we felt we needed US-only language as a necessary layer of added protection for the private data of our patients and caregivers.

Remember that both healthcare and technology are people-driven, so consider the human factor when creating and deploying healthcare technology. Insist on policies and practices that the users of your technology can understand and execute (e.g., limit access to certain data sources, use multi-factor authentication for some transactions, consider bans on use of personal devices for work, etc.).

Pursue innovative technology that makes sense to your company/specialty. At VITAS, we're exploring virtual reality technology as a tool to relieve anxiety and stress among patients, enabling them to take bucket-list trips or enjoy relaxing, calming experiences without leaving their home or bed. Our recently updated hospice app for clinicians helps our referral sources determine hospice eligibility with a disease-specific, interactive palliative performance scale.

Staying pace with technology requires vigilance, innovation and a commitment to change. Let that be your guiding philosophy in 2020.

South Florida Hospital News and Healthcare Report's number one goal is top quality healthcare journalism written and edited for the region's most successful, powerful healthcare business executives and professionals.



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