

## Healthcare IT: A Principled Approach

### Executive Summary

Electronic health records, health information exchanges, revenue cycle management, physician networks, patient portals, and the accelerating trend toward distributed medicine – with so much going on in healthcare IT, it’s easy to get lost in the details, waste money and effort, even work at cross-purposes. To avoid that trap, we recommend stepping back and establishing a set of *business principles* guiding how your institution will deploy and leverage information technology. These reference points articulate your ambitions, values, preferences, and ground rules. They belong not to the IT organization, but to the institution and its leadership. They enable you to be emphatic about priorities and investments, and to steer a coherent and purposeful course. Each healthcare provider institution’s principles for IT will, of course, be different. But we’ve developed a starter set. We invite you to try these nine principles on for size, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss our principles and yours.

Category	Principle
<b><i>Ambition</i></b>	<b>Pursue far more than stimulus money.</b> If you’re going to the trouble of revamping your information systems and technology, you should be after clinical performance, operational and cost efficiency, revenue realization, and enhanced relationships with patients, families, physicians, and employees. The stimulus dollars are only one measure of success.
<b><i>Key Objectives</i></b>	<b>Excel at information integration and exchange.</b> Integrate clinical, operational, and financial information to speed diagnoses, improve outcomes, drive revenue, and improve efficiency. Build the infrastructure for extensive and <i>secure</i> information exchange, and you can thrive in tomorrow’s more distributed and collaborative healthcare marketplace.
<b><i>Strategy</i></b>	<b>Leverage technology for growth.</b> Whether you plan to grow by acquisition, through alliances, or by becoming a clinical or business services provider to other institutions, information technology should be a catalyst, not a constraint.
<b><i>Customers</i></b>	<b>Focus on the customer experience.</b> As healthcare markets become more competitive, and benefits and treatment options become more portable, better informed patients exercise greater freedom of choice. The <i>experience</i> of consuming medical services grows more influential, and IT plays a growing role in that experience.
<b><i>Employees</i></b>	<b>Put information to work on the front lines.</b> The key to greater consistency, productivity, and innovation in healthcare delivery processes is getting information to the front lines of patient care and business service. That’s where physicians, nurses, and others interpret situations, discover patterns, self-optimize, and teach and learn from one another.
<b><i>Management</i></b>	<b>Meaningful use means measurable use.</b> Consider your strategic direction, then interpret what “meaningful use” really means for the performance of <i>your</i> institution, as well as for your physicians, employees, patients and their families. Then measure what really matters as never before.
<b><i>Success Factors</i></b>	<b>Flexibility wins.</b> The healthcare industry and IT are going to stay in motion. The only way to thrive is unprecedented <i>agility</i> in your business processes and information systems. Build a technology platform whose components support today’s operations and can be reconfigured to do things differently tomorrow.
<b><i>Finances</i></b>	<b>Information technology initiatives should be self-funding.</b> Recognize and manage <i>all</i> the sources of financial value associated with IT initiatives – stimulus money, cost reduction in business and clinical processes and technology infrastructure, and applications for revenue cycle improvement, which can have dramatic payoff.
<b><i>Timing</i></b>	<b>Hasten slowly.</b> You’ve got to act and invest now, but you can’t do everything at once. You need to be moving quickly yet deliberately – and on a path that you’re confident in. Articulate your ambitions, then develop the IT roadmap to help you realize them.