Benefits and Project Management to Improve Success of IS/IT Projects in Healthcare

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rapidly changing business environment is putting growing pressure on organizations to deliver successful projects that align with their strategic objectives. As a result, the use of emerging information systems and technology (IS/IT) has expanded significantly across various sectors, with healthcare being a major area of focus. Two critical factors have driven the surge in Health IS/IT investments. First, the rising burden of chronic diseases has led to healthcare costs increasing at a much faster pace. Second, there is a recognized need to greatly improve the quality and safety of health delivery. These factors have led to strong investments in IS/IT to enhance the speed and accuracy of information sharing, which is crucial for supporting clinical decision-making. However, many IS/IT implementations have faced low success rates. The authors suggest that by integrating the Project Management approach with the Benefits Management approach, organizations can improve these outcomes, ensuring the effective realization of benefits from IS/IT investments and increasing project success.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the public and professional demand for health-related information, with the Internet emerging as a dominant platform for accessing such data (Hermes et al., 2020). Investments in Information Systems (IS) and Information Technology (IT) for healthcare have not only become financially significant, but they are also continuously growing on a global scale (Fryatt & Blecher, 2023). The increasing reliance on digital tools to enhance healthcare delivery and management signals a transformative shift in the industry. This digital transformation is not only driven by the need for efficiency but also by the growing demand for personalized care, improved patient outcomes, and the need to reduce operational costs (Agarwal et al., 2010; Jones & Karsten, 2008). However, the introduction of new technologies often poses significant challenges, including interoperability issues, user adoption, and data security concerns (Glaser, 2011; Doolin & Lawrence, 2005).

As a result, it is imperative that healthcare organizations take a more structured approach to project evaluation and benefits management to ensure that these substantial investments deliver their intended outcomes. Effective evaluation methods, such as benefits realization management (BRM), allow organizations to align technology initiatives with strategic goals while ensuring measurable benefits (Ward & Daniel, 2012). Furthermore, consistent monitoring and feedback mechanisms are necessary to assess the ongoing impact of digital tools in clinical and administrative environments (Schultz, 2006; Kaplan & Harris-Salamone, 2009).

Failing to establish a robust project evaluation framework can result in wasted resources, missed opportunities for improvement, and reduced patient care quality (Kerr et al., 2008). Therefore, integrating comprehensive planning, evaluation, and governance structures is critical for maximizing the return on investment in healthcare technology projects (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1999; Bradley et al., 2012).

Since the late 1960s, we have witnessed a steady increase in IS/IT healthcare investments, but this trend has accelerated dramatically over the last decade (Thimbleby, 2013). This surge reflects the rising importance of digital solutions in addressing the growing complexities of modern healthcare systems. These investments encompass a wide range of technologies, including electronic health records (EHRs), telemedicine, artificial intelligence (AI), and wearable health devices, all aimed at improving the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of care.

In its broadest sense, IS/IT for healthcare refers to any tool, framework, or system that facilitates the communication, processing, or transmission of information electronically, with the primary goal of enhancing human health outcomes (Bukachi & Pakenham-Walsh, 2007). These technologies have become indispensable in both clinical and administrative settings, transforming everything from patient diagnosis