



INSIGHTS FROM THE BDO CENTER FOR HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE & INNOVATION

# DIGITAL INNOVATION IS TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE. HOW MEDICAL STAFF CAN ADAPT.

## Securing Tech Adoption Buy-in from Key Stakeholders to Innovate Patient Care

By Herman Williams

The infiltration of technology into healthcare continues to impact the roles physicians, nurses and other care providers play in the healthcare space. To thrive in this environment of innovation, effective digital transformation—the application of today's digital advancements in tech to solve business problems—can serve as healthcare organizations' lifeline through capacity transformation and the creation of new services.

### HEALTH TECH: NO SIGNS OF SLOWING DOWN

Digital innovation is happening across the spectrum of care. From startups to tech giants, emerging players in health tech are challenging hospitals and health systems to reimagine and reinvent the ways their businesses deliver value to patients.

According to a [survey from BDO and the NEJM Catalyst](#), healthcare executives, clinical leaders and clinicians at organizations directly involved in care delivery expect that companies like CVS/Aetna and Amazon will continue to disrupt

the healthcare industry well into the future. Not only are these new entrants promising more digitally enabled, consumer-centric products and services, but their increased participation and innovation in the healthcare space also threatens to upend the more traditional care delivery methods and roles.

Apple, for example, has transformed its Apple Watch from a fitness tracker into an FDA-cleared device that can monitor heart health and notify users to seek medical attention for heart arrhythmias. This increase in the capability of wearable technology has huge implications for clinical care models, as access to a treasure trove of patient data could allow physicians to monitor the health of their patients virtually and in real-time.

To keep pace with the emerging advancements in health tech, healthcare executives are preparing for both digital and medical staff transformation. [BDO's 2019 Middle Market Digital Transformation Survey](#), for example, finds that 63 percent of healthcare organizations are already implementing training

to upskill current employees on digital transformation and technology advances, and 57 percent are developing a formal change management strategy.

But transformation does not happen overnight. To successfully integrate new technologies into the workforce, healthcare organizations must find ways to promote workforce buy-in throughout all levels of their businesses.

## POWERING MEDICAL WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

With health tech products and services like telemedicine, electronic health records and wearables on the rise, the healthcare workforce has been tasked to develop and deploy new skillsets and products that address both the industry's burgeoning digital capabilities and its move towards value-based care. As these technologies become more widely available to consumers and providers alike, hospitals and health systems will need to transform into digitally-savvy, tech-enabled businesses or risk being left behind.

When embarking on a digital transformation journey, leaders at healthcare organizations should always consider the people components of change—and when it comes to caregivers, their organizational leaders should focus on addressing three challenges:

1. **Generational Gaps:** Currently, three generations of physicians are active in the workforce: Millennials, Gen Xers and Boomers. And soon, physicians belonging to Gen Z will also join the mix. To drive successful transformation, leaders at hospitals and health systems must know how to communicate with and understand the learning styles of each generation—as strategies and tactics that may secure buy-in from the Boomer generation of physicians may not work as well with the Millennial generation, and vice versa.

**BDO's Quick Take:** When introducing new technologies into a healthcare organization, distributing an introductory video or requiring the completion of an educational course may not be enough to bring a multi-generational medical staff sufficiently up to speed. To combat competing levels of comfort and frustration with new tech in the workforce, it is important for leadership teams to determine and address generational differences at the outset of a digital transformation initiative and find ways to connect with each generation individually. For example, because Baby Boomers did not grow up with the same access to technology as their younger counterparts, they may require more hands-on workshops and on-site support when it comes to learning how to navigate and operate new technology with ease.

2. **Physician Burnout:** Physician burnout—which costs the [industry \\$4.6 billion](#) a year—is a growing problem for healthcare organizations across the country. At the same time, a [physician shortage is predicted to hit the United States by 2032](#). While there are many causes of career fatigue, leadership teams must understand that digital transformation may result in added stress for physicians and fuel burnout further. Therefore, as organizations begin to introduce new digital systems and processes into the workforce, it is highly imperative that they provide physicians the proper education and tools to understand how to navigate the new technologies with ease. On the flip side, organizations can also use digital transformation to counteract physician burnout if used to energize the workforce and update healthcare facilities that lack modern equipment and technology. Those that don't risk losing high-performing medical staff worried about a facility becoming too risky for practicing medicine safely.

**BDO's Quick Take:** For digital transformation initiatives to have a truly positive effect on physician burnout rates, they should work to simplify processes for physicians, not complicate them further. We work closely with medical staff leaders to evaluate underlying causes of physician burnout and ensure that workforces are receiving the proper training and resources needed to seamlessly adopt, use and improve upon new technologies.

3. **Digital Transformation Misconceptions:** Care providers should understand the benefits of digital transformation before they are expected to endorse change. Instead of feeling like new technologies are taking away from their time and creating more administrative tasks, digital transformations should be framed as opportunities for healthcare organizations to improve efficiency, spend more time with their patients, innovate patient care and even create new products. For example, AI has the potential to accelerate a provider's ability to identify, diagnose and treat high-risk patients and assist in prioritizing medical staff support accordingly. But to secure medical staff buy-in, the value of using AI must be well-communicated and easily apparent, and providers must be able to share feedback at the individual level. Not only will these tactics increase employee acceptance, but they will allow for providers to freely engage with and improve upon the existing technology.

**BDO's Quick Take:** Generating employee buy-in is vital to all healthcare organizations, as the care providers of today—physicians, nurses and community health workers alike—must be just as adept at executing “websites” manner, and diagnosing and interacting with patients digitally, as they are at practicing the more traditional bedside manner. Telemedicine, for example, can allow physicians and other care providers to treat patients outside of hospital walls and

through remote, mobile devices, but providers must maintain a sense of connection with their patients (i.e. bedside manner). By using technology to meet patients where they are in real time, healthcare organizations have the opportunity to provide consumer-centric telehealth experiences that improve patient outcomes and reduce the cost of care delivery.

## THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE INNOVATION

American demographics are shifting and by 2035, seniors will outnumber children for the first time in the nation's history. This rapid demographic transformation necessitates an evolution by healthcare organizations to reflect the needs of an elderly-dependent population and increase investments in technology and products centered around elder care.

Healthcare executives who have already drawn up plans to [increase their investments](#) in home health, palliative care and geriatric caretakers by 2020 will be well ahead of their peers as elder care moves away from facility-focused models and towards home-centric ones.

Achieving successful digital transformation through capacity transformation can provide care providers more time with patients. It can even lead to the creation of entirely new healthcare systems and services that improve patient care and quality of life—and this holds true particularly with

nurses, innovators by nature and the largest group in the healthcare workforce.

For nurses, capacity transformation will be key in helping them solve for not only the mounting physician shortage, but also some of today's most perplexing health challenges. In fact, [clinical and business leaders rank](#) chronic care management, mental health (including addiction) and population health in the top four areas where nurses have the most opportunity to transform care by 2025.

As the senior population continues to grow, workforce transformation and nurse-led innovation will be crucial to improving patient outcomes, both at lower costs and according to patients' changing care expectations.

As disruption from new entrants and major technological advancements prompt healthcare organizations to seek innovative, data-driven ways to remain competitive, digital transformation should be a guiding light for effectively navigating—and capitalizing on—medical staff transformation and the technologies of tomorrow.



To learn more about how your organization can transform its medical staff to lead in a tech-driven healthcare ecosystem, contact [Herman Williams](#), Managing Director, MD, MBA, MPH at [hjwilliams@bdo.com](mailto:hjwilliams@bdo.com).

## HOW CAN BDO HELP?

We understand the complexities that come with leading transformative change at scale and can assist healthcare organizations in:

- ▶ **Analyzing medical staff demographics** to gather a baseline understanding of inherent challenges
- ▶ **Implementing customized training programs** that support various types of learning, teaching and communicating styles in a way that helps advance health tech into the business' infrastructure
- ▶ **Providing tailored leadership development programs**—for both short- and long-term strategic planning—to further digital transformation initiatives and patient care innovation
- ▶ **Setting and tracking against key performance and quality indicators** to identify opportunities for practice and procedural optimization
- ▶ **Monitoring workforce outcomes and employee satisfaction rates** to move an organization from workforce acceptance to workforce adoption
- ▶ **Reviewing current bylaws and recommending revisions** to ensure compliance with current rules and regulations, and proper governance regarding when, where and how a new procedure is performed
- ▶ **Developing credentialing policies and procedures** that reduce staff conflicts and provide clear guidelines and processes to assist in patient care innovation



## CONTACT

### HERMAN WILLIAMS

Managing Director, MD, MBA, MPH  
The BDO Center for Healthcare Excellence & Innovation  
615-493-5622 / [hjwilliams@bdo.com](mailto:hjwilliams@bdo.com)

### MALCOLM COHRON

National Digital Transformation Services Leader  
404-979-7109 / [ccohron@bdo.com](mailto:ccohron@bdo.com)

### DEEPAK CHAUDHRY

National Leader, Technology Advisory  
713-548-0939 / [dchaudhry@bdo.com](mailto:dchaudhry@bdo.com)

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