

- Strategic Planning
- Leadership Advisory Services
- Business & Financial Planning
- Clinical Program Planning
- Physician Strategies
- Medical Staff Development
- Ambulatory Care Planning
- Facility Planning & Space Programming
- Demand Forecasting & Resource Development

[Click here to view part I of this series on program planning](#)

Strategies & Solutions is the monthly electronic newsletter published by [Health Strategies & Solutions, Inc.](#), which provides cutting-edge strategies, innovative solutions, and practical ideas for health care professionals. We welcome your [comments and feedback](#). To subscribe or unsubscribe to this publication, click on the links at the bottom of this page.

Creating the Building Blocks for Thriving Clinical Programs

Part II: Key Physician Components

Last month we addressed the challenge of developing strong clinical programs as the fundamental building blocks of successful health care organizations. Thriving clinical programs, whether they are broad or narrow in focus, depend on three key elements:

1. A sound program plan
2. Physician-hospital alignment
3. Supporting facility resources

[Part I](#) of this series examined the elements of a well-rounded clinical program plan. Part II focuses on areas of clinical program development that offer opportunities to achieve greater physician alignment.

When we take a look at the key characteristics of strong clinical programs, quality, efficiency, and leadership emerge as the three most important issues to address with physicians.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG CLINICAL PROGRAMS

- Clarity of program vision and strategic direction
- Strong growth orientation
- Excellent physician specialists and subspecialists
- Dedicated administrative and physician champions
- Multidisciplinary team(s) of providers
- Operational and clinical coordination
- Demonstrated superior outcomes
- Clinical excellence and innovation
- Full range of diagnostic and treatment services
- Appropriate facilities and technology
- Focused marketing and distinctive brand identity
- Commitment to education and clinical research where appropriate

Quality

Providers' ability to demonstrate superior clinical outcomes strengthens the program's competitive positioning. Initial steps in the pursuit of quality are measurement and demonstration. Federal and state governments, employers, payors, and others are continuously expanding the public reporting requirements for hospital and physician quality performance data. The stated goals of these efforts are to provide the public with useful and valid comparative information about health care providers' quality of care and to promote quality improvement efforts. Outcomes data are also increasingly being used as a basis for hospital and physician pay-for-performance incentives.

Click here to view IHI's
*Engaging Physicians in
a Shared Quality Agenda*

One set of strategies for engaging physicians in the quality agenda was published recently by the [Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#). The six principles in IHI's approach include:

- **Discover a common purpose**- Be clear about what specific *patient* outcomes are targeted for improvement and focus less on institutional needs; identify how hospital processes can be more efficient, thereby creating more time for physicians to collaborate across the organization to benefit the patient; understand the organization culture and history of physician alignment initiatives and set expectations for quality improvement accordingly
- **Reframe values and benefits** - Physicians and hospitals are *partners* in the delivery of services and the only *customer* is the patient; resources, information, and decision-making authority are shared; physician's quality responsibility is systemwide and for the individual physician
- **Segment the physician engagement plan** - Identify and focus on the physicians who are most important to the quality initiative's success, including one or two champions and formal and informal

- leaders; develop a plan to support them
- **Use engaging improvement methods** - Determine what standard protocols will be used and assess the culture's readiness for use of physician-specific performance measures before incorporating them into the quality process; the right thing should be easy to try and do
 - **Show courage**- Apply the change consistently to all parties and don't bend the rules; support the identified physician champions in their role
 - **Adopt an engaging style** - Engage physicians early and often to build support and trust for the quality initiative; maintain an open communication channel and solicit feedback

Efficiency

While the recent focus of hospitals and health systems has been on establishing formal business relationships with physicians to grow strong clinical programs, equally important is the need to continue "earning" the business of the physicians that support these premier programs. Questions to test your organization's efficiency rating among physicians include:

- Is there adequate access to convenient operating room time? Is block time sufficient?
- Are the ancillary services efficient (e.g., capacity, staffing, scheduling, throughput, and results reporting)?
- Is there a formal and multifaceted physician practice outreach program to identify opportunities for improvement?
- Is access to specialists timely for referring physicians?
- Are the information systems adequate to support clinical practice?
- Is there a hospitalist program available and what has been the performance of this group/function?

When economic relationships are the best strategy for clinical program growth, it is important to focus on what the business model is intended to accomplish, and then determine the most appropriate structure to meet that need. Many alignment options exist for hospitals and physicians including a fully integrated employment model, joint ventures and revenue sharing, enhanced payments (e.g., call coverage, medical directorships), and practice support for recruitment.

Leadership

Dedicated physician champions are a critical element in successful growth and development of clinical programs. Formal leadership training programs for physicians are increasingly being offered by health care organizations as a means to cultivate and develop the skills that will be required for effective physician participation in the growth and development of premier clinical programs. A variety of methods

are available to engage physicians in the strategic, clinical, and operational leadership. Two examples include physician advisory committees and service line operating councils.

Physician advisory committees focus on strategic issues that impact the organization, such as quality, partnerships, and resource allocation. Multiple specialties and new and senior physicians should be represented, and role clarity for the committee should be achieved through formal job descriptions. The key responsibility of this committee is to build consensus on major issues and inform the larger medical staff audience.

Service line operating councils are operationally focused, with the goal of making clinical practice more efficient for physicians and other clinicians. Surgical scheduling and staffing are examples of issues that might be addressed by this group.

Active physician engagement in clinical program planning and development is not just an advantage but a requirement for achieving growth in market share, stronger financial performance, and measurable improvement in clinical and service quality. Hospitals and health systems that successfully align with physicians around quality, efficiency, and joint program leadership will strengthen their competitive positioning in the market and benefit from the multiple positive outcomes of stronger physician-hospital alignment.

For more information on physician-hospital alignment within clinical programs, contact [Kathy McCarthy](#) at 518-877-0935 or kmccarthy@hss-inc.com.



Kathleen H. McCarthy
Principal

If you would like a free subscription to Strategies & Solutions, please [click here](#).

Copyright 2008 by [Health Strategies & Solutions, Inc.](#)

8 Penn Center

1628 John F. Kennedy Boulevard, Suite 200
Philadelphia, PA 19103

(215) 636-3500

www.hss-inc.com

Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Competitive strategies.
Innovative solutions.
That's our business.



This email was sent to: [sstewart@hss-inc.com](mailto:ssewart@hss-inc.com)

Go [here](#) to leave this mailing list or [modify](#) your email profile.
We respect your right to privacy. [View](#) our policy.



This email was sent by: **Health Strategies and Solutions, Inc.**
8 Penn Center 1628 John F. Kennedy Boulevard , Philadelphia , PA, 19103 , USA