

E-NEWS EXCLUSIVE

**CHIEF DATA
ANALYTICS OFFICER**

A Trending Role for Providers

By Hillary Ross, JD

Leadership roles in analytics have been in place in managed care/payer organizations for a long time. However, they are relatively new on the provider side as many organizations are now embracing the importance of analytics and viewing analytics officers as critical for their senior leadership teams.

Based on the strategic shift toward value-based care from fee-for-service, health care organizations are looking to deliver better care at a lower cost. According to Moh Zaman, vice president of analytics at Hartford Healthcare, “Organizations that are going to succeed in this journey are the ones that consider data a natural resource of their ecosystem and are committed to using it effectively.” To excel, Zaman and others believe executive leadership is recognizing the importance of creating a full-time data analytics officer position, and making it senior in the organization to ensure its credibility and success across all business units.

In health care, the analytics function has existed in some form for decades and had oversight by leaders, including chief medical informatics officers, chief quality officers, and CIOs. As a result, analytics has traditionally been used either to meet the apparent operational needs or to drive value through siloed analytics initiatives spearheaded by certain stakeholders who had some funding and resources available in their own groups.

A paradigm shift from organizations doing the bare minimum through data to creating actionable insights and exploring value-driven clinical pathways has triggered the need for the role of chief data analytics officer. This position will have an overarching responsibility to help an organization leverage its data assets to their full potential.

For this article, industry experts offer their insights regarding the core responsibilities of a data analytics officer.

Create a Governance Structure

The analytics data officer must establish a governance framework over two core areas: analytics program governance and data governance. To manage analytics program governance, the analytics data officer needs to assemble a group of senior leaders from lines of business that will align the analytics program with the organization’s mission, monitor the progress of the analytics program, prioritize key strategic initiatives and projects, approve an analytics roadmap, and facilitate funding. The data governance function involves the data analytics officer forming a data governance council and data governance office, and creating synergy among resources.

Promote a Culture of Data-Driven Decision Making

This is the most challenging part of the data analytics officer’s role. Compared to other industries, data analytics is a

new discipline in health care. In addition, stakeholders usually have limited access to data. Many stakeholders don’t even know what to do with the data beyond meeting their immediate tactical business needs. This is a huge cultural shift in which the data analytics officer has to be the change agent. He/she needs to identify the organization’s innovative thinkers, partner with them on high-value, high-impact initiatives, and increase analytics adoption by showcasing successful projects to the rest of the user community.

Quantify a Return on Investment

Demonstrating the return on investment to executive management is the linchpin to having continuous support and funding for the analytics program. There is no standard scale to measure the value delivered through an analytics program—it is the responsibility of the data analytics officer to demonstrate this value.

Standardize the Data Analytics Platform

The data analytics officer must build a partnership with the clinical, research, business, and IT units to create a “single source of truth” through a sound architecture for the analytics platform.

Break Silos

He/she must integrate silos and share information across the organization to optimize investments in time and resources that will deliver best practices through optimal data repositories.

Define the Path

Finally, the data analytics officer must create a roadmap to demonstrate the value that will be delivered incrementally by leveraging analytics and help attain the desired level of maturity over a period of time.

Health care systems have invested millions of dollars in clinical and business systems. Data is now pouring out of these systems, and the data analytics officer is critical in the management and analysis of this data to impact business intelligence, cost, efficacy, research, and, most important, patient safety and quality of care. Given that this role is still emerging in the health care industry, organizations that have recognized the value of this position are experiencing challenges in finding the right person. Today’s data analytics officer in health care must have the requisite skill set and cultural fit, but also be a strong leader to facilitate an organization’s goals in a value-based landscape.

— Hillary Ross, JD, is an experienced HIT executive search consultant for the firm Witt/Kieffer. She specializes in the recruitment of chief medical informatics officers and other senior-level clinical IT leaders for hospitals, health care delivery systems, academic medical centers, vendors, and consulting firms across the country. She is based in Witt/Kieffer’s Oak Brook, Illinois office.