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RHIO vs. CHIN: Why Should It Work Now? **By Sean McPhillips, MBA, MPA, CPHIMS**

All the buzz at the 2005 National HIMSS Conference was about this “new concept” known as a Regional Health Information Organization, or “RHIO” for short. Interestingly, the community tossed the term RHIO around as if it were common knowledge and generally accepted, when in fact most of us were hearing this term for the first time. One educational session at HIMSS referred to a RHIO as a “New fabric of community-based health information exchange.” But, is this a new idea?

A RHIO, to put it simply, is a group of interested healthcare stakeholders who collaborate to develop the financing, business rules, technology, and governance structure necessary to permit providers and healthcare systems to electronically share patient information in a defined community or region (Source: www.calrhio.org).

Sound familiar? It should. Over a decade ago, this very concept was tried in numerous locations around the nation under its previous moniker, the CHIN, i.e. the Community Health Information Network. At the height of CHIN popularity, various regions around the country attempted to employ a CHIN with minimal success. Dayton tried their attempt at a CHIN through the Greater Dayton Area Health Association (GDAHA). To date, few CHINs experienced anything more than moderate success.

So why should it work now?

It shouldn't, at least not in the same way. The fact is, the technology to make a RHIO successful has been in place for well over a decade and should have made CHINs successful too, but they didn't. So, why did the CHINs fail and what can we learn from the failure of CHINs to make RHIOs successful?

To begin with, we need to remind ourselves what the mission of our industry is. In short, the healthcare organizations we work in primarily follow the Public Administration model, *not* the Business Administration model. Although there is substantive overlap, at its core, the two schools of thought have critically different missions.

In a business, the core mission is to have revenue exceed expenses to generate a profit, i.e. to make money. In a public administration organization, the core mission is to serve the people. By our very nature and reason for existence, we are supposed to be altruistic in the way we do our jobs and meet the needs of those we serve. The notions of “competition”, “making money”, “protecting self-interests”, etc., are not nearly as important as providing the best quality of care for the community we serve.

It is the opinion of this author that the CHINs of the past failed because too many of the critical players in the CHINs were thinking like Business

Administrators and *not* Public Administrators. They were more concerned about “owning their information”, “losing market share”, “competition”, or even letting their “competition have access to their proprietary patient information.”

Here is what they forgot. They forgot that it is the patient that owns the information, not the healthcare organization. They forgot that business factors should not interfere with the primary goal of serving the people. They forgot that the open, honest, and unbiased sharing of *all* health information will substantially improve the quality of care throughout a region, resulting in a substantial reduction of medical errors. The list goes on.

In short, the concept of a RHIO is fantastic and long overdue. If properly installed with the right mindset, that being the interests of the patient community above all else, then RHIOs will be the new landscape of healthcare information at the community and societal level.

If the organizational leaders don't take the lessons learned from the failed CHIN attempts and set the missions of the RHIOs to be true to their altruistic intent, then the RHIOs will likely fail as fast as the CHINs did, and at a cost that healthcare organizations probably already can't afford.

Member Spot Light:
Richard Manley, Manager,
Information Systems,
Fairfield Medical Center,
Lancaster, OH

Richard Manley has over 23 years of sales experience as well as director level experience

with Information Systems and Telecommunications. Richard has effectively managed the day to day operations for a team of system operators, software application specialists, network administrators and PC/help desk support to become a cohesive working team, establishing quality improvement and delivering positive impact to the organization's bottom line.

Richard has served on the CSOHIMSS Chapter Board for several years. Currently, Richard serves as the chapter's Programming Chair. On the heels of the great success with the Fall 2004 Conference, Richard is organizing the upcoming Spring 2005 Conference on May 13th.

Success Story: Multi-Chapter Luncheon at HIMSS National

This past February, the Central and Southern Ohio Chapter of HIMSS partnered with the Bluegrass HIMSS Chapter and the Indian HIMSS Chapter to organize a multi-chapter luncheon. With over 120 people in attendance, the turnout was far better than any of us could have imagined.

This year's luncheon was the product of the success of last year's luncheon at the 2004 National HIMSS Conference in Orlando, Florida. Due to last year's success, attendance for the 2005 Luncheon increased by approximately 50%.

The buffet was catered professionally and the organization of the event went off without a hitch. In addition, with the sponsorship of corporate partners, there was no cost to any of the chapters' members in attendance.

This multi-chapter forum allowed these closely neighboring chapters to interact in a way they we never have before. It provided a sense of cohesion that we all agreed would lead to mutual benefit on future endeavors.

Different from last year's luncheon, we secured a guest speaker to address the group. Norris Orms, Chief Operating Officer of National HIMSS gave a brief overview of HIMSS activities and the value provided to members by local chapters.

In addition, this year's luncheon was substantially better funded due to the generous donation and support of our many chapter sponsors.

As a result, these neighboring chapters will likely support and attend future events with one another. Finally, all three chapter presidents agreed that this luncheon will be a regular event at future HIMSS Nationals.

Plans are already underway for the multi-chapter luncheon to be held at the 2006 National HIMSS conference in San Diego. We invite all to attend and there is no cost to chapter members (a free lunch!).

If you have any suggestions for improvement of the multi-chapter luncheon and/or if you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us directly.

For those of you who are interested in learning more about what's going on at our neighboring chapters, visit their websites at:

<http://www.bluegrasshimss.org>
<http://www.indianahimss.org>
 or you can get involved more with our own chapter. (Hint ☺)

Chapter Business, Activities and Participation:

Calendar of Events:

Event	Date & Time	Location	Registration
Bluegrass HIMSS Spring Conference 2005	April 28 th and April 29 th	Caesar's Indiana Casino Resort	Register
CSOHIMSS HIMSS Spring Conference 2005	May 13 th , 9am – 4pm	Quest Business Center, Wingate Inn, Columbus, Ohio	Register
Realizing the Potential of the Digital Hospital	April 5 th and April 6 th	The Indiana Heart Hospital	Register
Indiana HIMSS Spring Conference 2005	May 18 th , 8am – 5pm	Informatic IT Building, Indiana, University, Indianapolis	Register
HIMSS Summit	June 6 th and June 7 th	Marriott Marquis, New York, New York	Register

Call for Nominations:

Annual Elections are upon us for the CSOHIMSS Chapter. The following positions are currently open for nomination:

- Secretary
- Communications Chair
- Program Chair
- Government Advocacy Chair

All positions carry with them a 2 year and a seat on the Board of Directors for the chapter. FYI, if you are ever interested in becoming a chapter President, serving on the Board for a minimum of one year is a prerequisite.

Also, get plugged into what is going on at the chapter level and have an influential voice in what activities and conferences our chapter sponsors.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in chapter activities or if you are interested in volunteering in any other capacity, please contact Darby Dennis, at contactus@csohimss.org.

Open Request to Members:

The CSOHIMSS Chapter has an open request to all members for any subject or issue that they would like to see the chapter address.

Addressing the issue could be in the form of a feature article or a conference presentation.

All suggestions welcome. Please consider those that are current, relevant and of pressing concern to the healthcare industry.

Presentation and article suggestions should be forwarded to the Board at contactus@csohimss.org for consideration.

Chapter Sponsorship:

As mentioned in previous quarterly newsletters, the Board of Directors for the Central and Southern Ohio Chapter of HIMSS has revised the Chapter Sponsorship Program to better serve the membership. The new pricing structure and benefits are as follow:

Five Star (\$1,000 per year):

- Two Full-Day CSOHIMSS Event Sponsor (Spring and Fall) with two Event Passes
- Premium representation at CSOHIMSS Luncheon
- All other Three Star Benefits

Three Star (\$500 per year):

- One Full-Day CSOHIMSS Event Sponsor (Spring or Fall) with one Event Pass

- Attendee List for Event
 - Sponsor Display table and Introductions at Event
 - Logo featured on website
 - Listed in all CSOHIMSS communications
 - All other One Star Benefits
- One Star (\$300 per year):
- Contributes to CSOHIMSS Luncheon at National HIMSS Annual Conference, Includes free attendance to Luncheon, free to mingle with other attendees
- If your company is interested in becoming a Chapter Sponsor or if you have any suggestions as to how companies may benefit better from sponsorship, please request an application at: contactus@csohimss.org.

Member Feedback:

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!!

This section posts questions and comments from chapter members. If you have a comment or question, send them to Sean McPhillips at newsletter@csohimss.org for consideration.