Games for Health: Building the Case

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ABSTRACT

How to reduce cost, improve quality, and improve customer engagement are top of mind for healthcare leaders. Healthcare organizations are developing and testing comprehensive engagement strategies to support consumers across the care continuum. In this environment some form of priority setting must occur, and it requires establishing connections between proposed innovation to a process of care and the outcomes. Digital tools offer a promise of meaningful measures that are affordable, embedded in the care delivery system and truly reflect patients’ experiences through the patient journey. This paper proposes a pragmatic path for building a business case for innovative digital health tools in community care settings. It overlays value model for healthcare IT investments with patient activation measures and innovation management techniques. It proposes that the intersection of system-generated measures and psychometric methods for data collection and analysis may lead to development of feasible patient engagement measures for healthcare.

Keywords: Business Case, Community Care, Digital Health, Patient Engagement, Quality of Measurements

BACKGROUND

Today’s citizen consumer is challenged identifying true value. Stretching the family budget, trying to get ahead, the majority of us have bought into the marketplace mantra of “cheaper is better.” However, we are more challenged still measuring value in socially vital sectors such as Health and Education. Plainly, there are no simple formulae. While value dimensions are known (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2013), decision makers’ perspectives vary widely, and the ways organizations are structured to gather data and make decisions are equally diverse. The problem of establishing connections between processes of care and their outcomes is not trivial either, although a number of frameworks have been put forward (Ryan & Doran, 2012; Serumaga et al., 2011; Van Herck et al., 2010). What everyone seems to agree on is a need for meaningful measures that are feasible, affordable, and embedded in the care delivery system (Beck et al., 2013). Digital tools, including ‘serious games’, create opportunities to improve engagement and quality of measurements. In practice, the issue of measurement always arises when introducing a process redesign. Each new idea within such redesigns brings in its own relative risks and advantages. It can seldom be described in a simple equation; Understanding impacts upon the care process, and determining the “dose”

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of care to be delivered requires a good deal of context. Finally, most innovative projects in health care will bring together a diverse set of perspectives, expertise and expectations. The diversity of language and approaches to framing problems makes development and evaluation of new products complex. This in turn slows down development and adoption. How do we develop the business case for game-based applications in Health? This paper describes processes, parameters and methodologies for doing just that.

The Lean Start-up Methodology (Ries, 2013) is a widely used framework for developing new software products. Although it is most useful in start-up settings, the centrality of customer discovery and validated learning has penetrated deeply into the corporate psyche and become integral to innovation management across sectors and organizational domains. Creating and launching digital tools for health is no simple task, but one thing is certain: your team will go through multiple iterations of the Build-Learn-Measure cycle on the path to developing a relevant value proposition for users while also demonstrating value to business managers. Thinking about product development as “validated learning” lays foundations for Growth Mindset among all participants – from builders to business managers involved in the project. Growth Mindset, a phenomenon described by Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck (2006) during decades of research on achievement and success, stimulates the resilience essential to getting things done. Growth Mindset plays an especially important role in long development and implementation projects, which are typical in healthcare. Your team will reach new heights if its members learn to embrace the occasional tumble.

WHO IS AT THE TABLE?

To succeed introducing innovation in a multi-stakeholder environment it is important to map out priorities for each stakeholder and make sure that all relevant points of view are considered:

1. When describing an IT development project it is most common to focus on the tactical elements of delivery: meeting specifications, working within time and budget constraints, and developing the robust architecture necessary to meet expected levels of quality and scalability;

2. When we talk about successful management, the focus is on strategic achievements: meeting an organization’s business goals, contributing to competitive advantage, generating financial results, and allocating resources wisely;

3. When discussing quality in healthcare we must discuss measures specific to certain care settings. For example, in rehabilitation, the FIM® instrument helps care providers assess patients’ physical and cognitive status;

4. When patients confront a new interface within the care system they will seek simplicity and support on their journey towards self-management and improved health.

Thus, developers of an innovative solution face the significant challenge of carving a path that both defines and measures success by addressing at least these 4 perspectives.

PAYER’S PERSPECTIVE

Healthcare payers – whether private insurers, sickness funds, or even governments themselves – must deliver care to a pre-defined population within a fixed spending envelope. In this environment some form of priority setting must occur (Farrar, Ryan, Ross, & Ludbrook, 2000). Until recently, it was not uncommon to allocate resources in health organizations on the basis of historical or political patterns. Although a lot of work is underway in outcomes research (“EPC Evidence-based Reports,” 2013), connections between processes of care and outcomes is still not well understood. In such connections we find information important in determining the value obtained from health care investments.
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