

Three lessons on

WINNING

your next digital initiative

The strategic outlook, leadership structures, and governance processes you need to support digitally enabled initiatives

Across health care, capital is flowing away from historical “brick” investments and toward digital “click” investments. But how do you make the most of these new investments in digital? Your organizational structures and processes can make or break digital innovation. We spoke with **15 IT, digital, and strategy leaders** to understand the lessons they’ve learned about how to effectively plan, lead, and govern digitally enabled initiatives.



STRATEGY

Don't create a digital strategy—embed digital in your business strategy



Digital should both drive and reflect your strategic priorities. Digital touches every part of the business and should be woven throughout your larger strategic plan as an enabling capability.



Many organizations have separate digital roadmap, but it must be an extension of your strategic plan. Your digital roadmap needs to be reviewed and refreshed frequently, at least twice a year.



Digital leaders need a seat at the executive table to help solve problems with digital solutions. Digital teams are often asked to create products for various departments without understanding the problems being addressed.

ADVISORY BOARD ANALYSIS

Consumer and business needs can change quickly. Adopting an agile approach to prioritization will help you respond to dynamic needs.

LEADER INSIGHT

We think about digital not as a strategy, but as a tool in our arsenal for other strategies, such as managing the cost of care or improving the customer experience.

VP strategy and business development, nonprofit health system in the West

LEADERSHIP

Job titles aren't important but relationships and soft skills are



Communication and collaboration are essential skills, regardless of the digital leader's job title. Some organizations hire a chief digital officer to lead digital initiatives, while others lean on the CIO or CMIO.



Digital and IT need to be close strategic partners. Digital initiatives need to be integrated with legacy systems like the EHR and supported on the back end with the right infrastructure, hardware, network, and security.



The digital leader needs direct access to the CEO without too many layers of hierarchy. The digital leader should ideally report to the CSO, the COO, or the CEO. An agile, matrixed leadership structure enables collaboration and swift decision-making.

ADVISORY BOARD ANALYSIS

Digital leaders also need to partner closely with physician leaders. Digital initiatives are more likely to fail from a lack of physician and ambulatory support than for technical reasons.

LEADER INSIGHT

A lot of these roles blend together, it's all about having respect for people and what they bring together.

CIO, large integrated delivery system in the Northeast

GOVERNANCE

Make digital governance processes clear but not restrictive



Governance keeps digital aligned with your strategy, but excessive governance can hinder progress. Covid-19 has highlighted the need to adapt quickly to change, but too many required approvals can stall innovation.



A lack of any formal digital governance can lead to duplicative products cropping up across departments. To course correct, leaders must devote precious time and resources to consolidating redundant applications and licenses.



A lightweight governance process prevents redundancy without slowing productivity and innovation. Clearly communicate the governance process to all operational units that want to be involved in digital.

ADVISORY BOARD ANALYSIS

Establishing trust across the executive team is key to creating and sustaining a lightweight governance process. Transparency and consistent collaboration help to foster this trust.

LEADER INSIGHT

Because we are transparent, the governance is very light touch. We don't have to go to the executive committee every time we want to build a new project.

Chief digital strategy & business development officer, not-for-profit health system in the West and Southwest

For more resources on how to leverage technology to redefine health care, visit [advisory.com/digitalhealth](https://www.advisory.com/digitalhealth)



This document does not constitute professional legal advice. Advisory Board does not endorse any companies, organizations or their products as identified or mentioned herein. Advisory Board strongly recommends consulting legal counsel before implementing any practices contained in this document or making any decisions regarding suppliers and providers.

© 2020 Advisory Board • All rights reserved • WF3183959