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Unleash Data Power

by Roberta domos, RRT

Use outcome measurements to grow your business.



It is no secret that there are good business reasons to collect, aggregate, and review outcome data within your organization. But knowing what data to collect and how to promote your company's growth with the collected data can prove a challenge.

To run any successful business, a company must excel in two areas that it can improve with the strategic collection, tracking, and analysis of data. The first is operations management, where a careful review of outcome data can help the company run at optimum efficiency. The second is marketing, where it can use outcome benchmarking to differentiate itself from its competitors. Or, in plain

language, prove that statistically it produces better results than its competitors do.

Each of the two areas requires using outcome data slightly differently, so take a careful look at both to determine the information that will be most useful to your company.

Operations Management

In today's world of capitation, prospective payment system (PPS), and lower reimbursement rates in general, operational efficiency can be the key to a profitable bottom line. While you may believe that your organization is operating efficiently, hard data can highlight the redundancy or waste that exists in even the most lean of organizations. For example, if you could cut even 1% off your cost of doing business by making simple adjustments in response to outcome measurements, you could use this recovered revenue to promote growth or improve the bottom line.

Suppose you notice that your company's shipping costs and number of shipments have increased over the past 12 months. To determine what is responsible for the increase, you collect data from the patient delivery invoices and shipping logs for the last 3 months. Your analysis of the data shows that 16% of your shipping costs go toward shipping equipment and supplies to patients already scheduled for routine follow-up in the home.

You conclude that shipping supplies to patients who will receive follow-up visits is an unnecessary expenditure. Either your patients get an inadequate supply during the follow-up visit, or they use too many supplies between visits. You realize that by reviewing delivery procedures and supply use with your staff, and asking them to review supply use with patients, you could decrease your shipping costs by up to 16%.

Another useful efficiency indicator is comparing data on net revenue per full-time staff member with industry standards. By seeing how your staff measures up, you can determine overall staff productivity.

There is no limit to the data indicators available for your analysis, but collecting data for the sake of collecting data is seldom a good use of time. Before you choose an indicator to study, think about areas in your organization where there is room for improvement. Once you pinpoint an opportunity for increasing efficiency, you can devise a fairly simple action that will result in savings.

Marketing

Most home care companies focus their marketing efforts on building a reputation for providing responsive service and high-quality care. However, because so many use that same marketing method, the approach does not differentiate one company from the next.

To gain market share, create a plan that will set your organization apart. Patient-centered outcome tracking does that, often without extra effort on the part of your staff.

In many cases you already collect data you can use for outcomes studies in the normal course of doing business. To make the most of those efforts when choosing outcome indicators to measure, think about which indicators are meaningful to your referral sources and highlight areas where your company shines.

For instance, most HME provider records include some patient compliance data when completing continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy follow-up. Convert this raw data into charts and graphs that show measurements such as the average number of hours per night your patients wear their CPAP masks, improvements in daytime sleepiness, or simply improvements in the patient's subjective feelings of health and well-being since initiating therapy.

Response time from equipment order to delivery is often important to discharge planners. If your company has a quick response time, gather data on your delivery time and include it with your marketing materials.

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Simple patient satisfaction outcomes, such as the percentage of patients who would use your company again, can also provide excellent marketing brochure material. If your company is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and must participate in data benchmarking of outcome indicators, highlight the areas where your organization improves upon the industry average for your referral sources.

These are many more examples of outcome measures useful for marketing. To come up with them, meet with your sales staff and ask them to tell you what other information your referral sources would find valuable.

So what are you waiting for? Step outside the box, get creative with your data-tracking activities, and use outcomes tracking to your organization's advantage.

6 Tricks for Perfect ORYX Vendor Picks

Before you can use your ORYX outcome data, you need a vendor to crunch the numbers and tell you what those measures really mean. But choosing the best ORYX vendor for your business can be confusing. To help simplify the process, try the following six steps.

1 Compare services rendered and not just price. Some ORYX vendors take your raw data and aggregate it for you before creating reports and providing benchmarking data. Other vendors require you to aggregate the data before sending it on to them for JCAHO reporting and benchmarking.

2 Choose a vendor whose indicators include those that will also interest your referral sources. Look for a vendor with a large number of indicators available so that your organization's choice will not be limited, whether you intend to use the resulting data for performance improvement activities, marketing activities, or both.

3 Ask about the size of the benchmarking pool, meaning the number of other organizations participating in the same data set you will be using to track outcomes. More is better when comparing your outcomes against others.

4 Check if any data collection software provided will interface with your billing system software so your staff avoids redundant patient data entry.

5 Make sure that the vendor provides a secure means of transferring confidential patient data, and that they plan to make data transmission processes compliant with future Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy rules.

6 Look for a vendor whose data collection software will easily pull data into a spreadsheet program so you will have the ability to create custom outcome reports within your own organization.

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