



# IT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

## Overcoming the Impact of Rapid Tech Adoption:

Formal project intake and governance coupled with self-service support portals help to optimize resources in Healthcare IT

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Faced with steadily rising demand for IT support of all kinds, including individual and project support, healthcare IT executives and managers are having to develop leading-edge strategies to manage that demand. Healthcare Innovation recently executed a survey on behalf of TeamDynamix, looking into some of the core challenges and opportunities in the current landscape around healthcare IT and IT project management.

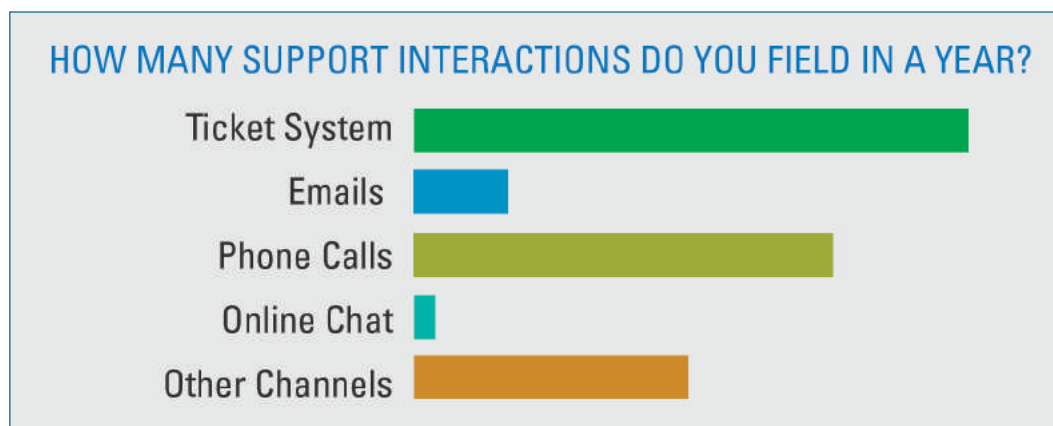
The survey results speak to both the challenges and opportunities. The topline result? The top challenge facing Healthcare IT leaders was identified as “Resource Constraints” tied with “Competing Priorities for IT Projects.”

What is interesting is that the vast majority – 60% of respondents report that their IT budgets have increased in order to meet the needs of patient care organizations, as they begin to move into the emerging value-based healthcare system.

This paper will explore how to optimize resources, gain better control of IT projects while operating in an environment with a rapid increase in tech spend.

## One of the areas we will look at first is IT support – where can we find efficiency gains?

Asked what types of support interactions they field on an annual basis, respondents ranked those responses, in order: ticket system; phone calls; e-mails; and online chat.



In order of volume, 40 percent of support interactions are being fielded by a ticket system; 33.7 percent, via phone calls; 4.17 percent via emails, and 0.06 percent via online chat. An additional 20.9 percent were fielded via other channels.

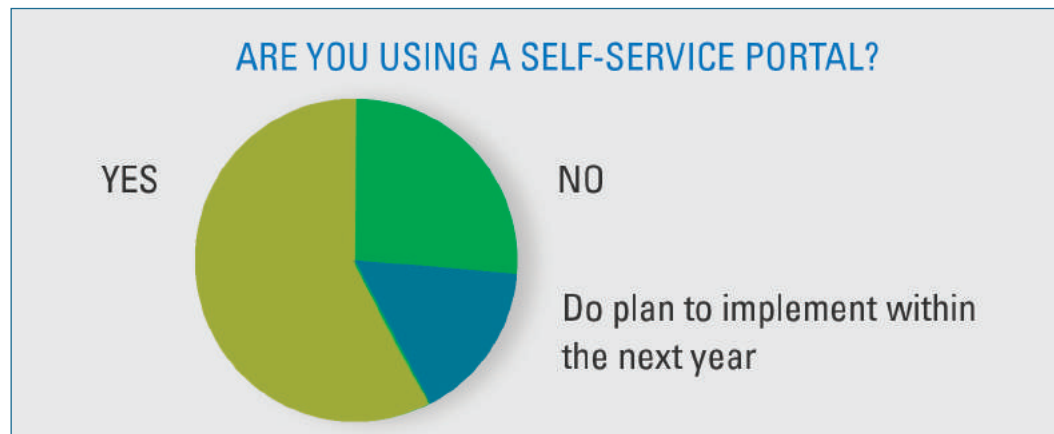
According to HDI, a support call costs \$22.00 while a self-service platform will net out at \$2.00 per inquiry.





## Why Self-Service Is Important

One mechanism that can help is the use of a self-service portal.



As survey respondents revealed, 42.1 percent of the study respondents are not using a self-service portal. Yet among those organizations that do not yet have a self-service portal, 36.8 percent are planning to implement one in the next 12 months.

"What that significant survey result tells me is that there are people who are thinking about the importance of self-service, and whether they have one or not yet, the vast majority are thinking about it," says Andrew Graf, Chief Product Strategist at TeamDynamix. "In our work with client organizations, we've seen a huge percentage of the people talking about this. Once organizations go live with self-service portals, they reduce inbounds by 70 percent."

Graf goes on to say, "So imagine what that allows you to do: it facilitates a couple of different things. Number one, the IT organization's resources can now address the most pressing issues for the enterprise more quickly than ever before, and IT professionals can spend more time doing things right, and can continue to improve service, when they're not frantically putting out fires and addressing urgent concerns. So they're building their knowledge, improving their service, and end-user satisfaction, and can free up resources to do other things, too. So it becomes a key benefit. And often in healthcare, when you have a huge diversity of audience, self-service works out beautifully, both for staff members in the organization, and for healthcare consumers."

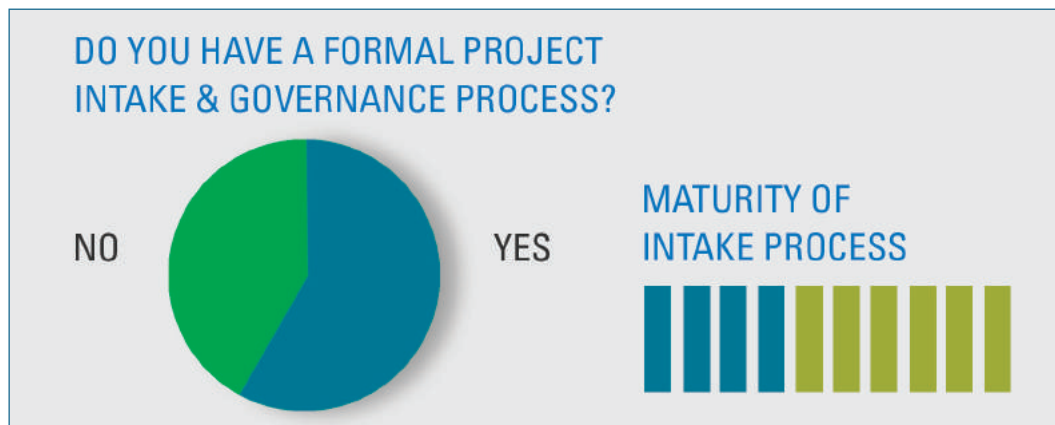
## Accessibility Matters

In addition, Graf says, "The second factor is that service should be accessible. When it comes to patients and consumers, the leaders of patient care organizations need to make

sure that, in all their consumer-facing services, they adhere to the WCAG 2.0 AA [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines] standard for accessibility, which governs all organizations interacting with consumers, and which accept federal funding.”

## The importance of formal project intake and governance processes

One of the key findings in the survey is around the implementation of formal project intake and governance processes.



Asked if they have formal project intake and governance processes, 43 percent reported that they do not. Meanwhile, on a scale of 1 to 10, the average response when asked how mature their intake process is, was 4. And, connected to that, only 39 percent of organizations currently have a formal project management office.

“What a formal project intake process gains you is that it allows you to ensure that finite resources are being spent on the highest-use issues,” says Graf of TeamDynamix.

“Without a governance process in place, a lot of times, projects are being done on a first-come-first-serve basis, or based on whoever in the organization screams the loudest. A formal governance structure and process allows you to do apples-to-apples comparisons, with regard to analyzing potential projects and initiatives, and to set priorities, at a governance level.”

Indeed, Graf says, “As the demands increase on IT, every time that an IT organization implements a new system, that represents a little less time that the time has in order to get other things done. So the other great and powerful piece of developing formal project management and governance is around resource capacity management. With a formal project intake process and project governance, healthcare IT executives and managers can, with their colleagues across the enterprise, not only determine what the priorities are; they can also articulate to leadership which projects they can successfully execute on, and can push back on unrealistic expectations.”



For example, Graf says, "As a team, IT leaders can say to the potential project owners, 'It will take us 24 months to complete this particular project, given the existing resources available to us; but if we could hire three additional people, we could bring that timeline down to 12 months. In other words, IT managers can plan the use of resources well, and can use those resources well. We ask clients, what percentage of the time do resources not get truly focused on a project? And do you find your resources are ripped away from a project to fight fires? And if so, how does that impact you? And people tell us that that happens all the time, and it makes IT look bad. That governance and intake process can help you focus on the resources you need and can help focus on the highest priorities for the organization, and bring value, and it can actually help to enhance the stature of the IT department, because the department is delivering on its promises."

## Resource Issues Seen

Asked to rank their biggest challenges on a scale of 1 to 5, survey respondents cited two challenges that tied at the level of a "4": "lack of resources" and "competing priorities for IT projects. "Project timelines and budget slips" came in at a "3," and "end-user satisfaction" and "poor change management" clocked in at a level of "2."



All of that absolutely makes sense, says Graf of TeamDynamix. "Across the board, a lack of resources is a top issue, because demand outpaces supply of resources over time. So proper portfolio management gives us the ability to ensure that we can actually deliver on the highest-priority projects possible that we have the resources for. In hand with that, it gives us the ability to justify asking for more resources. And in the past, if you had five priority projects and were asked to add a sixth, well, that always leads to disaster or burnout. Put simply, throwing another log onto the fire burns all the existing logs. When there are competing priorities for resources, having a formal intake process in place gives the IT team the ability to compel executives in their enterprises, who are the owners of any projects or initiatives, to formally set their priorities, related to the organization's overall business and strategic objectives. And it allows IT leaders to fully determine what can be delivered on time and on budget, and in accordance with the organization's top strategic priorities."

Meanwhile, as the U.S. healthcare delivery system evolves forward into becoming a value-based delivery and payment system, the demands on the IT teams of patient care organizations will only grow more intense. And that once again reinforces why formal project intake and governance processes will become even more important over time. "I don't think that anyone in healthcare imagines that there will be less need for IT. And that reality falls on IT every time. Any patient care organization is always two new technologies away from being under water, in terms of revenues. In that context, it's incredibly important for IT leaders in patient care organizations to start optimizing and streamlining their resources far ahead of time. And that's another key element in all of this: it's not just about the resource burden and the challenges facing IT departments; it's also all about the fact that IT leaders want to add value to their organizations. Establishing these formal processes can help IT leaders to do that."

In the end, Graf says all of the elements around this topic come together: the need to establish formal intake and governance processes is fundamental—as is the need to optimize change management processes. "A formal change management process can dig into something like 80 percent of IT issues being caused by IT themselves," he notes. "And you can imagine—every time, this gets back to resources and priorities. Whenever there's a fire or crash and people are pulled off of those things to fight that fire; that's another way in which cost skyrockets for providing a service. If the IT department gets pulled into fighting a particular fire, they don't see the cascading impacts. Are other people's projects being impacted? That's a big downstream impact."

On the positive side, Graf says,

"I think broadly, healthcare has seen more innovation in the last decade than almost any other industry. And IT will have more opportunity in the future to positively impact patient outcomes, but in order to do that, they have to be ready to deliver, and to do that, they have to make sure that they're absolutely ready to take on these initiatives. We have to take control of our resource capacity, have to know what we have, and we have to not be spending time fighting fires on things we don't need to. So let's move as fast as possible to self-service wherever possible, and get better and better at that. And we as an industry need to improve our effectiveness at change management, so that we're not just fighting daily fires. The good news is that, in the next ten years, there will be new opportunities that no one even knows yet exist. And to do that, we have to be able to determine where our resources are and how we can shift our resources to do that, and that we are agile enough to be able to execute on the demands. Project and portfolio management, IT governance, and change management: those are the foundations, in all of this work."

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