

A photograph of four healthcare professionals in a meeting, overlaid with a blue tint. A man in a suit, a woman in a grey blazer, a woman in a white lab coat, and a man in blue scrubs are gathered around a table with a laptop. The man in scrubs is gesturing with his hands while speaking.

# HEALTH IT REIMAGINED

## 5 TRENDS CHANGING HOW AGENCIES OPERATE

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## Introduction

The world of health IT is constantly evolving, and a number of solutions and best practices have emerged to help agencies improve their systems and workflows. Here's an inside look at the digital health trends driving successful outcomes for clinicians, patients and other end users.

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The year 2021 introduced a number of significant challenges for health organizations. From vaccine and booster logistics to a surge in telehealth use and services, IT leaders have been operating behind the scenes to drive health outcomes for patients, clinicians and other end-users.

As we look ahead, IT leaders are turning to new innovations and emerging technologies to help them increase efficiency, improve accuracy and reduce administrative burden. Below are the top trends shaping health IT this year.



## 1 AUTOMATION

Automation seems to be on everyone's minds these days, and for good reason. **According to McKinsey**, 83% of IT decision makers say workflow automation is essential to digital transformation. And in a survey from the **World Economic Forum**, 50% of business leaders said they're ramping up efforts to automate repetitive tasks at their organization.

Health IT organizations, in particular, can benefit from this technology, especially as post-pandemic stress and burnout wreaks havoc on associates and staff industry-wide.

"Leveraging appropriate automation technologies can significantly improve productivity, quality, cost, customer satisfaction and associate morale," said Jane Hite-Syed, chief information officer at National Government Services.

Take, for example, the vulnerability scanning process. When it comes to tracking and managing security risk, embedding automation can prove critical to accuracy and success. According to Benjamin Hostetler, senior information security advisor at National Government Services, automation can save time and money by minimizing the time it takes to resolve an incident ticket.

"We typically look at that [in terms of] ransomware or a phishing attempt, and how long did it take the incident response group to actually resolve those?" he explained at the 2021 CMS Cybersecurity Forum.

After implementing automation into the vulnerability scanning process during RA-5, which is a vulnerability management control from NIST-800-53, Hostetler and his team cut mean time to resolution from an hour to a minute.



## 2 EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITAL SERVICES

Over the next year, federal health agencies will continue to adopt new technology and processes to drive business value. Cloud applications and tools, for instance, offer federal health agencies a flexible and compliant option for storing and managing troves of sensitive data.

Meanwhile, government CIOs are also focused on updating legacy applications to meet modern needs, like improving manual processes and implementing security best practices.

“Across the industry, we are seeing continued evolution and growth of cloud environments leveraging marketplace components to capitalize on automation and AI products, segregate security borders, and enable rapid development and pilots with customer feedback and involvement throughout that are DevSecOps enabled,” Hite-Syed said.

Security, development and operations must all work together, she added. National Government Services prides itself on embedding security at the very beginning of every solution and program it supports.

But adopting secure and effective technology is only one piece of the health IT puzzle. Another crucial part of enabling these services is creating a culture of experimentation. Agile processes like Scrum, Kanban, and Waterfall, for instance, can help organizations improve the end-user experience.

Indeed, because organizations’ needs — and the technology available to them — are constantly evolving, today’s IT leaders are adopting what’s known as a continuous delivery pipeline, where code changes and evolves before entering production. The approach also enables teams to deliver features and configuration changes safely, quickly and sustainably.



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### **Jane Hite-Syed**

*chief information officer*  
National Government Services



### 3 DATA DEMOCRATIZATION

Federal health agencies have access to more data than ever before, which presents both challenges and opportunities.

Certainly, more advanced information can empower decision makers with effective analytical capabilities, but it can also be easily misused and abused. To ensure data remains a strategic asset, data cataloging and governance are critical to success. That's especially true in the health IT ecosystem, where so many different users are sharing and accessing information simultaneously.

"As we look across the different agencies, we're all trying to solve the same problem and get to the same point, so understand ... the data and the governance that goes with it," Hite-Syed noted.

To achieve this outcome, she recommends building a unified data discovery platform to identify and provision enterprise data assets, business glossaries and metadata. Additionally, creating an agnostic data model can enable business analytical capabilities.

Indeed, data has the power to drive critical health and business decisions. To take full advantage of these insights, organizations must make decisions early and often and iterate based on new or emerging information.

## 4 AGILE MATURATION

If the last few years taught health IT leaders anything, it's the power of flexibility. From the transition to remote and hybrid work to the uptick in natural disasters across the country, organizations must be able to adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

While business planning can help teams identify goals and opportunities, it is also increasingly important to learn how to navigate changes. The ability to scale and accommodate spikes in service and activity (like open enrollment season, for example), will help federal health agencies improve the customer experience.

Moreover, training associates and staff on agility and adaptability will be critical going forward. This training will also prove beneficial as organizations embark on workforce planning and learning and development initiatives to upskill and reskill associates.

"Our associates are our greatest asset, so organizations need to embrace a culture that focuses on empowerment, mastery and purpose," Hite-Syed said. "We're always experimenting with new methods to attract talent and expand our associates' skills."



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*chief information officer*  
National Government Services

## 5 HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

With so many end users that make up the health IT ecosystem, developers and technologists must ensure their solutions are designed to meet the needs of the specific end user. This requires a human-centered approach that takes the user into consideration throughout the entire customer journey. It fosters empathy and understanding by diving deep into pain points and identifying opportunities for improvement throughout the development and delivery lifecycle.

National Government Services is one organization turning this strategy into action.

"[We're] using human-centered design and taking the approach of, 'What does the person at the end ... really need?'" Hite-Syed said.

Knowing clinicians have access to more data than they know what to do with, Hite-Syed and her team leverages HCD best practices to improve accessibility and offer a more streamlined user experience.

It's all part of the organization's mission to improve the health of humanity.

"Human-centered design connects people and technology," Hite-Syed said. "We're putting them at the center of everything we do."



**Want to find out more about how National Government Services is helping federal health agencies streamline their IT ecosystem?**

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