



# Ask An Expert

## Mobile-izing for success

*Next in a series on the Impact of Healthcare Reform on Supply Chain Management*

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The mobilization of applications and devices continues to be front-page news. Whether it's the iPad, Android or BlackBerry, mobile technology has created a huge wave of change. In addition, mobile technology is enabling businesses to research and find less expensive solutions from any location, on-site or off. The same is true in healthcare. Mobile devices provide new ways to manage patient care, and identify and track better outcomes. It's now a question of just how far we can go toward improving patient care and decreasing healthcare costs using data and information technologies supported by multiple platforms and multiple mobile solutions while sorting through the morass of information.

It is fascinating to discover that according to a study by the Health Research Institute, physicians actually use mobile Internet access more than twice as much as other consumers. Alarming, however, 33% of physicians said they make decisions based on incomplete information when treating patients. In addition, 88% of physicians would like their patients to be able to track and monitor their health at home, 40% of physicians said they could eliminate up to 30% of office visits through the use of mobile technology and 66% of physicians are using mobile health solutions that are not connected to their practice or hospital/health systems.

So, how does all of this reflect what is happening in the transformation of the supply chain? It continues to be about changing our business culture. Health reform is all about "bending the cost curve." As we rearrange the incentives, shifting our reimbursement to a system that rewards performance and outcomes rather than volume, many healthcare organizations are discovering that they need to adapt to changes beyond the current model and reevaluate the use of mobile technology.

In order to fully leverage mobile technology, healthcare systems must successfully address several critical hurdles when dealing with key information. These start with things as basic as the integration of mobile applications with legacy information systems, the management of multiple, independently authored applications, and a plethora of devices, not to mention issues of security, privacy, and confidentiality. And the future will bring more and more applications to this rapidly growing market. Applications that offer such valuable data as comparisons of physicians using specific products for specific procedures, price comparisons, and quality indicators are well within view.

Today, there are more than 10,000 mobile medical and healthcare/fitness-related applications available. With 75% of physicians carrying smart phones and using one or more medical apps, our health-systems need an industry solution to ensure the distribution, use, and knowledge-sharing of the best resources available.

Just last month, working closely with the provider community, GNYHA Ventures, Inc., announced the creation of Happtique, a mobile application store designed specifically to meet the needs of healthcare professionals. Healthcare providers, doctors, clinicians, nurses, all need real-time access to patient information, schedules, billing, drug, and other practice-related information in order to provide the best patient care. Access to current information about diseases, medications, laboratory and imaging data, and patient histories enable the medical community to determine the most appropriate treatment. Insurance companies, drug suppliers, and vendors need access to critical information such as product utilization and pricing. With mobile health applications, this information can be at their fingertips, literally.

We believe Happtique will bring healthcare leaders, mobile industry innovators, application developers, content providers, and end-users together to improve information flow and make it easier for healthcare professionals to discover and use healthcare apps. In the press release announcing Happtique, Lee Perlman, President of GNYHA Ventures, said, "We have entered a new technology-driven disruptive stage in the healthcare industry, brought about by the growth in smart phones, connected tablets, and apps that are transforming how clinicians, patients, and related stakeholders are managing their care. At a time when mobile technology is more important than ever in the healthcare workplace, Happtique will make it easy to locate, purchase, and install mobile healthcare apps to help everyone deliver better care at lower costs while saving time and minimizing errors."

Much like the changing dynamics to the supply chain that can help drive efficiencies and overall cost reduction, exploring mobile technologies in healthcare requires creative thinking, innovation, and change. Embracing these technologies requires resources, education, and, most importantly, communication throughout each organization. The full implications, and more importantly the full potential, of this mobile space is a challenge not only to providers, but also to developers, legislators and regulatory agencies, insurers, and even consumers. Now is the time to jump in and learn about these mobile opportunities, track data, and determine how technology can truly improve the quality of care, streamline processes and enhance efficiencies for providers, and ultimately lower costs. With mobile technology, the future may just be in our hands.

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