



CHALLENGE 08

Ignoring Policy, Standards, and Interoperability Until Too Late

Part of the Provider-Informed Field Guide

Whose Lens Is Your Health IT Go-to-Market Strategy Built Through?

"The environment around the product can be just as important as the product itself."



Developed by David Hacker, CPHIMS | Director, Elevate HIT Sales | MEDDPICC® Certified Trainer

A practical chapter for Health IT founders, revenue leaders, and commercial teams selling to hospitals and health systems.

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THE CORE IDEA

Healthcare Technology Does Not Operate in Isolation

A Health IT company can have strong technology, a compelling use case, and interested provider buyers—and still discover that policy, interoperability, data requirements, or regulatory expectations create commercial barriers the product team did not anticipate.

Hospitals and health systems operate inside an ecosystem shaped by interoperability standards, data-sharing requirements, federal policy, privacy expectations, reimbursement rules, governance structures, and technical architectures that continue to evolve.

Those forces can influence product design, implementation burden, integration complexity, evidence requirements, and whether a solution is commercially viable for a particular provider.

In Health IT, the environment around the product can be just as important as the product itself.

SELLER’S LENS VS. BUYER’S LENS

Health IT companies naturally focus on what their product can do. Providers also need to understand whether the solution fits the policy, interoperability, data, and technical environment in which it will have to operate.

SELLER’S LENS	BUYER’S LENS
“Our technology solves the problem.” • Strong product capabilities • Differentiated functionality • Successful demonstrations • Measurable outcomes • API availability • Integration capability • Access to required data • A product roadmap that supports growth	“Can this operate responsibly inside our ecosystem?” • How will it exchange data with existing systems? • Which interoperability standards does it support? • What data elements are required? • How does it fit information-sharing obligations? • Will implementation create new dependencies? • What policy changes could affect it? • How will future standards changes be handled? • Could this create compliance or operational risk?
Product capability matters. Ecosystem compatibility determines whether that capability can actually be used.	



WHY THIS BECOMES A GTM PROBLEM

Technical Possibility Can Hide Commercial Complexity

When policy, standards, and interoperability are treated as technical details to resolve after buyer interest is established, commercial teams may discover late that the solution does not fit the provider’s environment as easily as expected.

Integration Is Treated as a Checkbox The vendor says the product “integrates” without understanding the systems, data flows, standards, and workflow requirements involved.	Required Data Is Harder to Access Than Expected The solution depends on information that is unavailable in the required format, frequency, or workflow.
Policy Changes Alter the Buying Conversation New requirements or guidance change how the provider evaluates risk or future viability.	The Product Roadmap Trails the Market Standards evolve, but the vendor has not planned how the product will adapt.
Compliance Questions Arrive Late The commercial team encounters privacy, documentation, information-sharing, or governance requirements after the opportunity has advanced.	Implementation Burden Expands What appeared straightforward becomes a much larger integration and operational project.

A technically possible integration is not automatically a commercially practical integration.

PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE

What Policy and Standards Leaders Reinforce

STEVE POSNACK Former U.S. Department of Health and Human Services / Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT Understand the Policy Plumbing Frameworks and standards such as FHIR, USCDI, TEFCA, and information-blocking requirements shape expectations around healthcare data exchange. Vendors do not need to become policy organizations, but they do need enough awareness to understand how the environment affects their product and customers. Do not wait for the provider to explain the healthcare policy and interoperability environment your product must operate within. Hear the Conversation →	RAM D. SRIRAM Senior Science Advisor, Information Technology Laboratory, NIST Standards Create a Common Language for Trust For emerging technology such as AI, measurement, testing, uncertainty, and risk frameworks help organizations evaluate technologies more consistently and understand what evidence can—and cannot—support confidence. Standards are not simply technical requirements. They help providers determine whether claims about performance and risk can be trusted. Hear the Conversation →
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HOW TO DIAGNOSE POLICY, STANDARDS & INTEROPERABILITY READINESS

Know the Ecosystem Your Product Must Enter

Understand the major systems and data relationships surrounding the product: EHRs, clinical and operational systems, identity, data warehouses, APIs, exchanges, analytics environments, and third-party applications.

From experience: technical lift can become a major barrier even when the buyer likes the solution. In one case, a key stakeholder would not move forward until we proved the required EHR data could be extracted. A data analyst tested our lightweight JavaScript utility and within about 15 minutes confirmed we had captured approximately 97% of the required data.

From experience: our preferred long-term solution was a full interface, but requiring that upfront would have slowed the sale and increased provider burden. We used the lighter-weight data extract to get the customer operational, then worked toward the full interface after contracting.

The best integration strategy is not always the most technically complete on Day One. It is the one that reduces provider lift, proves feasibility, and creates a practical path to scale.

Understand the Standards That Affect the Use Case

Different Health IT products encounter different interoperability and data requirements. The sales team does not need to become deeply technical, but it should know which requirements materially affect implementation and buying decisions.

- FHIR
- USCDI
- Terminology standards
- API requirements
- Data provenance
- Identity
- Security
- Information-sharing expectations

Standards become a GTM issue when they determine how easily the provider can adopt the product.



HOW TO DIAGNOSE POLICY, STANDARDS & INTEROPERABILITY READINESS

Track Policy as a Commercial Variable

Policy can influence what data can or must be exchanged, how providers evaluate compliance, reimbursement, reporting requirements, governance, documentation, AI oversight, and future technology priorities. A policy shift may create opportunity, create risk, or change the provider's definition of readiness.

Policy should not be treated only as a compliance issue. It can change the commercial environment around the product.

Design for Change, Not Just Today's Requirements

A solution designed only around today's requirements may become difficult to maintain as expectations change. Providers may evaluate how adaptable the architecture is, whether standards updates can be supported, how quickly the vendor responds, whether integrations are overly customized, and whether the roadmap anticipates evolving requirements.

The provider is not only buying what the product can do today. It is taking a position on whether the vendor can keep pace with tomorrow.

DIAGNOSTIC CONTENT — BOTTOM LINE

Policy, standards, and interoperability readiness means understanding the ecosystem surrounding the product well enough to anticipate how data, integration, regulation, and evolving requirements could affect adoption and scale.



BETTER DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Don't Ask / Ask Instead

Good interoperability discovery goes beyond asking what EHR the provider uses. It helps the commercial team understand the data, systems, standards, and policy requirements that could determine whether implementation is practical.

DON'T ASK	ASK INSTEAD
"Which EHR are you on?"	"Which systems, data flows, and workflows would our solution need to interact with in order to operate successfully?"
"Do you support FHIR?"	"Which interoperability standards and data requirements will your organization expect this solution to support for this use case?"
"Can your IT team handle the integration?"	"What integration effort, internal resources, and technical dependencies would your organization need to account for before moving forward?"

The objective is not simply to prove that integration is possible. It is to understand whether integration is practical for the provider.



CHECKLIST + BUYER'S-LENS TEST

From Product Compatibility to Commercial Readiness

Before treating technical capability as evidence of commercial readiness, the sales team should understand the systems, standards, data requirements, policy considerations, and integration effort that determine whether the provider can realistically adopt the solution.

1. Questions Health IT Companies Should Be Able to Answer

• Which provider systems must the solution interact with? • What data is required? • Where will that data come from? • Which interoperability standards apply? • What integration effort will be required? • What internal provider resources will be needed?	• Which policy requirements affect the use case? • Could regulatory or standards changes alter product requirements? • How will standards updates be supported? • Are integrations scalable or highly customized? • What technical dependencies could create risk? • Can the vendor explain how the product fits the provider's broader ecosystem?
If the sales team understands the product but cannot explain how it fits the provider's technical and policy environment, commercial readiness remains incomplete.	



THE BUYER'S-LENS TEST

Ecosystem Readiness Should Pass Five Tests

An ecosystem-ready opportunity should allow the provider and sales team to answer “yes” to each of the following:

✓ **Yes, we understand where the solution fits.**

The required systems, data, workflows, and technical relationships are visible.

✓ **Yes, the interoperability requirements are understood.**

The relevant standards and integration expectations have been identified.

✓ **Yes, the implementation burden is realistic.**

The organization understands the resources and dependencies required.

✓ **Yes, policy considerations have been addressed.**

Known regulatory, information-sharing, or governance requirements are visible.

✓ **Yes, the vendor can adapt as requirements evolve.**

The product and company demonstrate the ability to respond to changes in standards, policy, and technology.

When those five answers are present, the provider is not simply evaluating whether the product works. It is evaluating whether the product belongs in its ecosystem.

DAVID'S GTM TAKEAWAY

Health IT companies sometimes treat interoperability, policy, and standards as subjects for the product or technical team. They certainly are. But they are also commercial issues.

They affect implementation effort, provider risk, evidence requirements, the buying process, and whether a promising solution can move from interesting technology to something the provider can realistically adopt and scale.

Know the environment. Understand the standards that matter. Stay close to policy changes that affect the use case. Do not wait until implementation to discover how difficult the technology will be to fit into the provider ecosystem.

In Health IT, the environment around the product can be just as important as the product itself.

Through the buyer's lens, the question is not simply “Can this technology work?” It is “Can this technology work inside our environment—today and as that environment changes?”



PART OF THE COMPLETE FIELD GUIDE

Whose Lens Is Your Health IT Go-to-Market Strategy Built Through?

Challenge 08 is one chapter in a 10-part provider-informed field guide examining the most common reasons promising Health IT companies struggle to move from initial interest to predictable revenue and scalable provider relationships.

The strongest Health IT go-to-market strategies are not built around how the vendor wants to sell. They are built around how the provider needs to buy.

01 Problem Importance	02 Pilot ≠ Commercial Validation
03 Payback Period	04 Workflow & Adoption
05 Security, Governance & Risk	06 The Buying Committee
07 Procurement, GPOs & Contracting	08 Policy, Standards & Interoperability
09 Scaling Sales Too Early	10 Pipeline vs. Commercial Readiness

[Explore the Complete Field Guide →](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Hacker, CPHIMS

Director, Elevate HIT Sales | MEDDPICC® Certified Trainer

David Hacker brings more than 30 years of experience across healthcare delivery, Health IT, sales leadership, and go-to-market strategy. His provider-side and vendor-side experience shapes Elevate HIT Sales' practical approach to helping Health IT companies sell more effectively into complex healthcare organizations.

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