

# Transform your organization

with physician engagement



## OBJECTIVES

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Understand the effect provider engagement can have on your organization's clinical and business performance

Evaluate the engagement of providers in your organization

Review tools and strategies to improve provider motivation and engagement

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the delivery system shifts from **volume to value**, providers are looking to evolve their business model in ways which require capabilities to enable their success under value-oriented reimbursement models. **Physician alignment and clinical integration**, supported by actionable data and analytics, are critical components for a provider to be successful. In order to achieve these goals, an appreciation for the importance of physician engagement to drive practice transformation cannot be ignored nor underestimated. Health systems have noted that **engaging physicians is the most difficult aspect of alignment**.

## BACKGROUND

Multiple market forces are affecting providers, putting pressure on their revenue and threatening their business models based on fee-for-service reimbursement methods.

The shift from volume to value requires that **providers evolve their business model**

**In the evolving environment, physician alignment approaches must recognize physician-centricity as the key to transformation in order for the business model or product to succeed.**

and transform the way they deliver care to remain successful in an environment that pays for cost and quality outcomes instead of the volume of services performed. While the delivery system is moving to a value orientation, the pace of change is uneven. Interest in value-based reimbursement continues to increase, but many providers remain hesitant to take on true risk believing they lack the capabilities, such as data interoperability, to successfully manage risk. At the other end of the spectrum, more advanced providers are taking on risk and seeking to launch their own health plans or contract directly with employers.

As providers look to evolve in the market, they are primarily interested in:

- Maximizing performance in value-based payment arrangements
- More meaningful patient visits
- Delivering an enhanced patient experience that drives patient loyalty

# VOLUME VALUE

Physician alignment and clinical integration are critical for a provider to evolve their business model and successfully manage risk. They are necessary to improve population health management or execute other strategic endeavors (e.g., maximize revenue, cut costs, or create new business models).

physician alignment – effective coordination between physicians and other providers  
clinical integration – a means to drive physician alignment

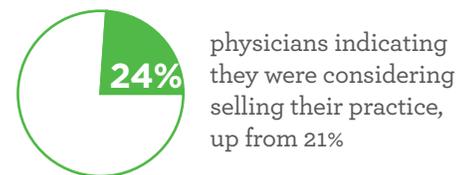
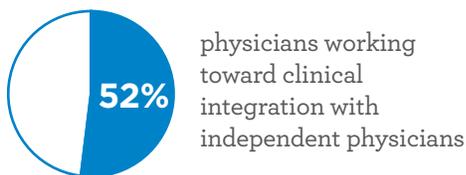
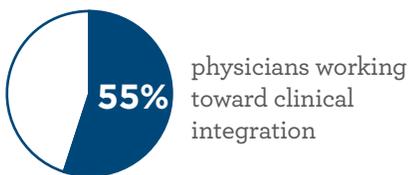
**Physician alignment** is defined as the effective coordination **between** physicians and other providers (e.g., hospitals, provider networks) to more effectively manage patient care and achieve financial and quality goals. For example: An organization of independent primary care physicians that use a team approach to ensure physicians work together to provide high-quality, high-value care and have aligned incentives.

“Transition success will be determined by organizational readiness, culture, operating capabilities, infrastructure, and leadership.”<sup>6</sup>

**Clinical integration** is needed to facilitate the coordination of patient care across conditions, providers, settings, and time in order to achieve care that is safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and patient-focused. To achieve clinical integration we need to promote changes in provider culture, redesign payment methods and incentives, and modernize federal laws.<sup>1</sup> A group of providers that are “clinically integrated” may have a governance body, aligned incentives, clinical programs and the technology infrastructure to coordinate care across settings.<sup>2</sup> These clinically integrated providers can also negotiate collectively with payers.

Many providers believe that physician alignment is important for achieving clinical and financial outcomes; however, not all understand that it can also drive practice transformation if done in a physician-centric way.<sup>3</sup> For those providers who are working to clinically integrate, most recognize that engaging physicians is critical, but is also the most challenging part of integration.<sup>4</sup>

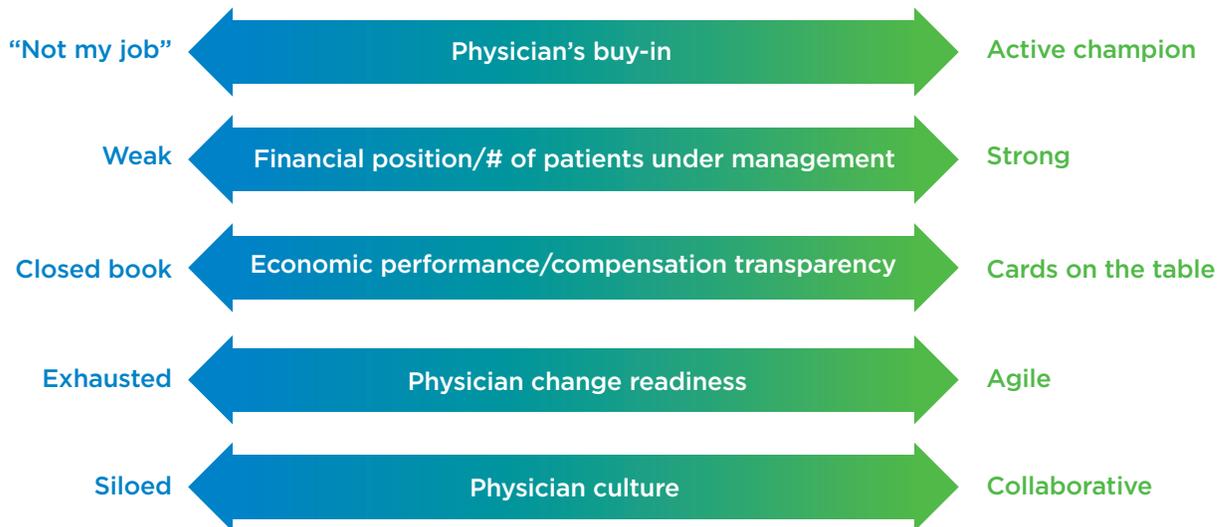
- A 2014 HealthLeaders Media Intelligence Survey on physician alignment found that providers expected physician alignment to improve clinical and financial performance and physician buy-in for quality initiatives, but **only a few expected physician alignment to support physicians in practice transformation.**<sup>3</sup>
- In the 2015 HealthLeaders Media Intelligence Survey, **55%** of the responders indicated they are working toward clinical integration and **52%** are doing so with independent physicians. **Engaging physicians in integration efforts is a critical step and 24% indicate it is the most difficult part of aligning physicians.**<sup>4</sup>
- The 2014 Practice Profitability Index found the number of independent physicians wishing to **remain independent declined from 60% in 2013 to 53% in 2014, while those considering selling their practice increased from 21% to 24%.**<sup>5</sup>



As care delivery models and payment methods change, care delivery networks must be able to make the transition and cannot ignore physicians’ needs for support nor exclude them from the creation of the solution.

## HOW ENGAGED ARE THE PHYSICIANS IN OUR GROUP?<sup>7</sup>

Physician engagement starts with an honest look at five core attributes that make up your organization. Your communication strategy should account for deficits within the group and capitalize on its strengths.



## STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT<sup>8</sup>



The stages of engagement are a continuum and physicians can enter and move across each stage. From the lowest level of engagement there is aversion (I’m not going to do this), moving up to apathy (I don’t care, but I won’t derail it) to supportive (I’m going to do this) and finally engaged (I’m proud to be a part of this organization).

Clearly organizational leaders want physicians and other participants to be fully engaged and supportive, not merely adhering to the protocol. However successful performance and physician engagement require alignment, involvement and integration. When physicians are aligned there is improved bidirectional communication, trust building and collaboration in decision making. When there is involvement there is pronounced enthusiasm characterized by belonging, pride and loyalty which foster a mutually committed relationship. Integration speaks to not just structural, but working relationships and operational synchronization of services to provide optimal, efficient, effective patient-centered care. When involvement, integration and alignment all come together, an organization has the formula to have an accountable care culture, a culture committed to performance.

## TOOLS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT



### How to support alignment

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Form a **communications committee** to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of communications. Develop, implement and refine your communication strategy and policy to help to create and reinforce an accountable care culture.

Create a **communications policy** with your board and the physicians using a communications policy template.

Recurring **electronic communications** can be used to disseminate information and convey timely notifications and information regarding current and upcoming initiatives. The board chair, medical director and physicians should be involved in the content which can include overall organizational performance results, areas of improvement and successes.

An **annual physician survey** can also help the organization keep a pulse on the group.



### How to increase involvement

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**Leverage board members as communications leads.** Each board member can be assigned to groups of four or five physicians. The communication lead can meet with physicians as a group or one-on-one. This allows leadership to share critical information with their designated group while answering questions and gathering feedback. The role will help them become more personally involved and aligned with key initiatives. Advanced communications can help to eliminate surprises at physician meetings. Then leadership can meet after the communication lead discussion to get the pulse of the group.



### How to strengthen integration

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**Schedule all physician meetings** with the board to increase cross communication and interaction. They should cover overall performance results and be used to launch key initiatives and communicate strategic planning decisions across the organization.

An **annual board retreat** (or incremental hourly meetings) will help the board to organize and address challenges that prevent them from fully functioning as a group. A survey should be conducted prior to the retreat or meetings to assess the status of the board's development and their ability to function as a group on behalf of the organization.

And, a **provider portal** can help to streamline operations and communications.

**To learn more about physician engagement and successful physician engagement practices, visit us at [careallies.com](https://careallies.com) or email [info@careallies.com](mailto:info@careallies.com).**

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