A Guidehouse Center for Health Insights analysis of an executive survey conducted by the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) took an in-depth look at hospital and health system leader health IT and corporate services strategies for the next 12 months.

As providers continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders were asked about automation, budgets, cybersecurity, and staffing challenges.

**Automation & Cybersecurity**

Where is your organization on its automation journey?

- **18%** Have not acquired or implemented automation technology
- **32%** Have acquired or designed/built and are testing automation technology
- **31%** Have deployed automation technology and are actively monitoring results
- **19%** Have driven positive results from our investments to date and are expanding automation capabilities

**3X more hospitals** have deployed automation technologies since 2020

50% have deployed or are driving positive results vs 15% in 2020
Which areas of technology/automation will be your priority over the next 12 months? (select all that apply)

- Automation 37%
- ERP Optimization 30%
- Cybersecurity 27%
- Other 6%

Automation is the top technology priority over the next 12 months.

What strategies has your organization put in place to address cybersecurity threats?

- Tracking technology assets so they remain in control of owners and users 1%
- Removed/removing legacy software and operating systems (such as XP) 9%
- Developed/developing an incident-response and communications plan 11%
- Implemented/implementing strong identity and access management 36%
- Using modern security technology to monitor network and device anomalies 43%

Only 1% cited tracking technology assets and just 9% cited removing legacy software, both critical to understanding current assets, their owners and users, and when they need to be updated.
Which choice best describes when your organization might deploy or upgrade its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system?

- Have already deployed an ERP that is fully optimized
- Have already deployed an ERP, but it is not optimized
- Within the next year
- Over the next year or two
- Over the next 2 years or more
- Maybe never

While a top priority, 45% of providers are still more than two years away from deploying ERP technology, with 15% suggesting they have no ERP plans.

45% are two years away or more from deploying ERP vs 36% in 2020

Key Takeaways

- The federal government, including the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, has taken significant regulatory steps to improve interoperability so that providers can easily and securely exchange data and automate technologies for internal and external purposes.
- Operationalizing technology represents a significant opportunity for providers to drive efficiency gains, especially in corporate services. For example:
  - Underperforming or underleveraged ERP assets significantly slow down operations, productivity, and employee engagement.
  - As health systems have undergone mergers and acquisitions, many have layered on new technologies instead of replacing the old ones — a common driver of insecure assets and cybersecurity threats.
- Generally, providers are not taking full advantage of the benefits their technology investments could bring to solve their greatest business challenges.
Corporate Services Spending

How much total spend on corporate services do you believe your organization could remove without negatively impacting service quality and efficiency?

Providers are spending more wisely on corporate services.

Key Takeaways

More than half of executives surveyed expect to be held accountable for reducing corporate services budgets or, at a minimum, holding them flat over the next year.

How is your organization's corporate services budget projected to change in the next 12 months?
What are your top priority areas for reducing corporate services expenses over the next year? (select all that apply)

- Supply chain: 17%
- Information technology: 17%
- Revenue cycle management: 17%
- Administration: 12%
- Facilities: 11%
- Human resources: 10%
- Finance: 9%
- Marketing: 7%

Providers are targeting the supply chain, information technology, and revenue cycle management as top priority areas for reducing corporate services expenses this year.

Key Takeaways
- The pressure for health systems to transform financial and operational performance has intensified with the pandemic.
- While the supply chain and revenue cycle are key areas to target, optimizing technology assets like automation is essential for providers to drive corporate services efficiencies that create a more resilient future.
- The technology itself won’t solve the problem but wrapping better processes and structure around an optimized solution will.

COVID-19 Impact on Staffing Shortages

To what extent is your current staffing shortage worse than it was one year ago?

- Nurses: 69%
- Behavioral and mental health providers: 32%
- Advanced practitioners: 25%
- Coding/revenue cycle experts: 21%
- Physicians (primary care, specialists, etc.): 20%
- IT-related experts (data scientists, engineers, etc.): 19%

Compared to a year ago, 69% of executives said nursing shortages have worsened, with 32% citing an increase in behavioral health shortages.

Key Takeaways
- It’s clear the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted shortages of frontline clinicians.
- Just 20% of executives suggested an increase in physician shortages compared to 35% in 2018, potentially due to suspension of elective procedures across the country.
Guidehouse Center for Health Insights

The survey analysis was produced by the Guidehouse Center for Health Insights, which provides a complete view of healthcare payment, operational, and consumer disruption insights and solutions. www.guidehouse.com/centerforhealthinsights

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