7 Factors to Consider Before Investing In An Analytics System

Defining one's vision and developing data-governance processes are important steps to take before evaluating data analytics vendors.

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Pam Arlotto, president and CEO of Maestro Strategies, a health care consulting firm based in Alpharetta, Ga., is the former president of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society. She advises hospital leaders to consider these seven issues before they even begin to evaluate data analytics vendors.
First, senior leadership should understand the business case for analytics in your health system. Analytics is not on-size-fits all and depends on enterprise strategy, readiness, direction and market needs.

1. Evaluate the current state of your analytics environment. What tools and systems do you already have in place? How are these systems being used?
2. What business and clinical problems are being solved today using data? "For example, analytics for enterprise performance improvement is very different from that required for population health management," Arlotto says.
3. Define the vision and desired future state of analytics for your organization. What tools, dashboards and people will be required to be successful? What will be the role of IT, data scientists, business/clinical intelligence teams, etc.?
4. Identify a potential proof-of-concept or demonstration project focused on helping the organization learn, and show the value of analytics.
5. Develop a data-governance process and define decision-making processes.
6. Finally, start a vendor short list. Develop a detailed requirements listing based on findings from the current and future-state analyses. Example questions might include:

- Does the vendor offer a comprehensive enterprise solution or just a point solution?
- Does the offering align with health system needs across all organizational levels and functional areas?
- What are the corporate vision and long-term plan for development?
- How does the vendor complement our existing systems?
- Does the vendor offer true analytics or just query and reporting?