

Want to Improve Your Operational Process? Start Benchmarking

BLOG

Do You Want to Improve Your Operational Processes? Start Benchmarking

Utilizing benchmarking as a tool to improve processes has been widely used across many industries. Benchmarking determines areas in which an organization can improve and helps set desired targets for process enhancement. During the benchmarking process, an organization collects data related to its own processes and compares it against industry standards.

In most cases, it is not complicated to benchmark data associated with an organization's financial performance - there are established accounting regulations that define what type of data needs to be collected and how it needs to be reported, as well as regulatory oversight in the form of financial audits that allows for data integrity and accuracy.

However, when it comes to operational efficiency, the situation can be quite disappointing. There aren't many industry standards, especially in regard to healthcare. The main difficulty cited by healthcare professionals is that there are so many variables in the patient care process that it's quite challenging to perform an "apples-to-apples" comparison.

For example, when you want to perform benchmarking of medical equipment utilization, you immediately run into the issue of defining what asset utilization is. Do you measure equipment utilization as a percentage of time the asset is being actively used providing patient care (e.g. IV pump pumping the medications, fluids, etc.)? Or maybe it should be measured as the percentage of time the equipment is in the patient room - regardless of if it's in use or not - as it is ready for delivering care and simultaneously not available to other patients.

And how about benchmarking patients' wait time in a clinic? Would you count the time that patients spend in the waiting area of a clinic? Do you also count the time a patient spends in the exam room waiting for a provider?

As you can see from these two examples, it would be hard to leverage industry benchmarking if no industry standards were established in this area.

Although you are not able to easily benchmark operational efficiencies across the healthcare industry, you can start by creating benchmarks for your own organization or healthcare system. Benchmarking will help your facility identify opportunities to improve processes and, more importantly, provide a strategic focus for your organization.

We see a growing trend among healthcare systems running their operations in a more data-driven manner, where each decision regarding resourcing and purchasing has a justification supported by data.

As technology practitioners, we see the tremendous value that real-time technologies can bring to healthcare organizations. The data generated through the use of location tags placed on medical assets or location badges worn by patients and staff can provide us with an unbiased, automatic, and

continuous stream of data.

This data provides a systematic and objective method of assessing your operational performance, defining your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and establishing best practices that could be applied across your organization.

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