

## **Communicating Your I-10 Message to C-Level Executives**

CEOs, CIOs, CMOs, CFOs, etc. are busy executives often moving from one topic to another – strategy, finance, human resources, patient safety – in a day or even one meeting. The amount of time and attention they can spend on a single issue is extremely limited. So, when you are communicating about your I-10 initiative, it's important to: know your objective, know your audience and prepare adequately.

### **Know Your Objective**

It's critical to know what you are trying to achieve with your communication. If your only answer is to 'keep the executive informed', you may want to give it more thought. Is your final objective to get resources approved, have a roadblock removed, obtain guidance or direction, receive help with important stakeholders or to change a policy? For example, your objective may be to: have an implementation team formed; obtain resources for conducting an organization-wide assessment or training; finding a champion to assist with bringing the medical staff on board; or having documentation requirements revised.

### **Know Your Audience**

Whether you are communicating to an individual or to a group, via an in-person or written format, it's also important to know your audience. If you don't already know, ask around to gain perspective on the technical level (knowledge on issues such as AR days, documentation requirements, etc.) and preference for detail (the 10,000 or 10-foot view; reasons or bottom-line only) of the audience. If you are communicating to an individual executive, be sure to use his/her preferred communication method (e.g., e-mail, informal conversation, formal presentation with one, many or no slides).

You will also need to know what it is that the executive(s) want to know. The primary concern for any given executive will vary. It may be the cost of implementing the proposed initiative in this fiscal year, the expected short-term impact on accounts receivable, the long-term impact on revenue or the impact on the medical staff. Strive to provide the information they want in a manner that is meaningful to them.

### **Prepare Adequately**

In general, you want your message to be concise and focused. (The following pertains to live presentations. However, much of the advice also applies to written communication.)

Begin with briefly describing the reason for your presentation. Then, use your allotted time wisely. Keep in mind that it is an executive presentation not a technical one. Given today's healthcare climate, it is likely that you will need to focus on the financial

implications of I-10 implementation. So, ensure that you provide accurate cost data, as appropriate. Don't wallow in detail. However, be prepared to give more detail if asked.

If the purpose of your presentation is to provide an update, try to distill your message to three key points that the executive needs to know. If you are providing options (e.g., outsource vs. in-house approach), present all pros and cons and give a recommendation. If you are conveying a problem or bad news, be objective and suggest a solution, if possible. Remember to leave time for discussion and questions.

If you are using a slide deck, aim to have no more than eight to 12 slides with meaningful graphics only. The use of cutesy animations may be perceived as a waste of time or silly entertainment. If needed, you can provide additional detail in an appendix.

If you think it will be helpful to your audience, you may want to compare your I-10 initiative/request to another used by the organization such as the HIPAA Privacy Rule implementation, Y2K readiness or meaningful use implementation.

While presenting, remember to read the room. It's easy to become fully focused on your presentation and miss the queues from the audience that may indicate they are confused or distracted. If your boss is at the meeting, he/she's demeanor will let you know if you are off the mark. If you sense something is not right, pause and ask if there are any concerns.

Finally, be prepared to adapt. You may arrive at the meeting to learn that your 15-minute time slot has been cut to 5. Prepare a summary to present your entire message in 30 seconds or less. You may not need to use your summary but it is still a great way to focus your thoughts.