When Should Physicians Hire An IT Consultant?

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Should physicians use a consultant to help choose a practice management system or EHR for their practice? According to recent Medical Group Management Association surveys more than 50% of physicians used the services of a healthcare consultant or firm at least once in the previous 3 years.

But did they have to? Was it a smart move?

The answer: It depends

Not every practice needs a consultant's assistance when replacing and choosing a new system.

You don't need a consultant if you've done your homework and have been diligent in determining your needs.

The size of your practice is not a determining factor as to whether to use a consultant. It depends more on your knowledge of the various products in the marketplace and how to integrate one into your operations.

Consultants will usually know more about the systems that are out there than you do. They typically work with 20 to 30 practices a year, and each of those might have a different system.

Consultants also attend trade shows where they see, hear, and learn about other, often newer, technologies. A good consultant will have a better-informed perspective of all the options available.

Naturally, you'd think a consultant would provide an objective view of all these options but objectivity isn't always a given. There are consultants who have some sort of relationship with a vendor or vendors, and that presents a conflict of interest, so always check references for the consultant, just as you would for a vendor.

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