



NOTES - FUTURE TRENDS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY JULY 13, 2007

Speaker

Gary Chapman, Professor at The University of Texas at Austin, LBJ School of Public Affairs

Panelists

Roland Hornbostel, Deputy Director for Policy, Ohio Department of Aging
Tim Chatterman

Mr. Chapman opened his discussion by describing how organizations are rapidly changing because of a new technological environment. Technology today has led organizations and everything around us to become dependent on connectivity to the Internet. It has also helped organizations to do more at either the same or a lower cost, compared to a decade ago. Mr. Chapman noted that trends in technology are also leading to a growing need to share information. These changes and developments will provide the aging network with opportunities to improve services and internal processes.

Mr. Chapman remarked there are several chief drivers of change, they include: increased network speeds; broad band becoming ubiquitous; an increase in data sharing and collaborations; open standards; and electronic health records (EHR). He noted increases in network speeds (e.g., DSL/Cable, high-speed cable, Verizon FIOS) are providing us with the opportunities and capabilities to access and send information faster. Faster internet connections also provides us with web-mail, video conferencing, online trainings "webinars", real-time collaboration, and online application and data access (e.g., Google docs, calendar, spreadsheet, pictures). Access to a range of applications via the Internet is paving the way for less dependence on desktop programs and portability to be consumer focused. Mr. Chapman stated as broadband becomes more ubiquitous, this wireless capability will change the function and dynamics of how people work, resulting in people and data becoming more mobile. He noted these trends will be a challenge for the aging network because the Internet is not always accessible to the population(s) they serve, such as low-income, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Mr. Chapman described how organizations are increasingly working together and sharing data as a result of new technologies. He highlighted that data sharing and collaborations will gradual end data silos. Mr. Chapman noted that the development and adoption of "open" standards or a common data format is key to seamless data sharing. An accepted tool for open standards is the Extensible Markup Language (XML). XML formats make data more flexible and easier to share, such as EHR. Mr. Chapman remarked the benefits of EHR can help create cost savings, increase data sharing, and portability of data, among others. He noted the cost of implementing and maintenance, and consumer privacy as challenges to adopting EHR.

Mr. Chapman concluded that new trends in IT will reshape organizations and how they do business. Organizations will also be more consumer-driven. He noted there will be no more isolated silos of information but rather information that is linked from various sources and accessible.



Discussions

An audience member asked what is an “open” standard is. Mr. Chapman responded that open standards refers to a format that will allow information to be shared between multiple computer systems. It is a common data format and way for computers to understand what they are being asked to share. XML for example is a standard open text format, which tells computers what things are rather than how they should be displayed.

An audience member asked how to you get consumers motivated to use technology. Mr. Hornbostel suggested being understanding to the fact that some users are not tech savvy, which might contribute to their limited use of technology or slow adoption of it. Mr. Chapman remarked, you should identify the users barrier to using technology (e.g., limited access, knowledge of use, etc) and then develop strategies around these barriers to encourage use.

An audience member commented that there is some disconnect between their IT department, programmers and users of the system. They wanted to know about strategies and solutions on how to deal with this issue. Mr. Chatterman responded that a good strategy to build internal partnerships is to have training. He noted you can also find a liaison or someone who has good people skills to facilitate a better working relationship. Mr. Chapman remarked that most problems between IT and users are because of a lack of communication. He suggested forcing both groups to interact with each other.