

# Front & Center

## Hub Change

Transitioning Hub programs is daunting. But making a major change can be a necessary step to foster a brand's performance through improved patient support services. At CBI's 6th Annual Hub and SPP Model Optimization Conference in Philadelphia this February, Scott Dulitz of Trialcard outlines key points of consideration and best practices to fast track the switch to move forward once you've come to the conclusion that a change is necessary.

**Y**our Hub program needs a change. Good, the first step is admitting it. Now what?

First step back and realize that change is a part of life and the complex systems that are ubiquitously engrained throughout our daily lives are not exempt. Consider systems as concrete and impenetrable as those at your friendly department of motor vehicles, your company's payroll or IT systems, a magazine's website and content management system or more adjacent to the healthcare industry, the perpetual discussions and difficulties around electronic health records. Clearly some systems require regular updates and they all, for reasons of their own, are flagged by impediments to efficient and necessary change.

For a variety of reasons, transitioning from legacy Hub providers to new offerings is a growing trend in the Hub services marketplace, explained Scott Dulitz, Vice President, Market Access Solutions for TrialCard. There are many reasons a company might be considering a change, among them: dissatisfaction with existing providers, budget constraints, or the inability of the current vendor for scaling up given brand's potential for growth.

Some companies have taken a Hub approach that cobbles together different services like nursing and adherence services, case management and navigation services, reimbursement support services, and patient education, engagement and empowerment by parsing out these different tasks among different patient services providers. But this piecemeal

### Why would I ever need to change my HUB vendor quickly?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Need new / integrated <b>capabilities</b> that current vendor cannot provide</li> <li>✓ <b>Budget</b> constraints require a more cost effective provider</li> <li>✓ Current vendor is supporting a <b>competitive brand</b></li> <li>✓ Existing vendor decides to <b>terminate</b> contract</li> <li>✓ Current vendor <b>service levels</b> are adversely impacting brand performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Loss of personnel and expertise</b> within current HUB</li> <li>✓ <b>Conflict of interest</b> with vendor's parent company</li> <li>✓ <b>Regulatory or compliance</b> concerns with current vendor</li> <li>✓ <b>Scalability</b> concerns with current vendor</li> </ul>
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approach is becoming the exception as more and more brands are leaning towards providers who can bundle these offerings, noted Dulitz. Many realize a need for new and/or integrated capabilities that their current vendor cannot provide. There can be many reasons, but what's clear in these cases, is that a Hub transition is necessary.

Once you've made the decision, you'll want to move quickly and efficiently. Like so many changes, ripping off a Band-Aid might be a good illustration of how to minimize long-term pain.

But the most important aspect of making a Hub vendor change, according to Dulitz is that you review and have a clear understanding of the contract with

your existing vendor. The obvious concern will be that once your legacy provider is informed that your relationship will be terminating, their investment and material support will decline lowering the overall service.

It is key that you understand the termination clause in your existing contract, he adds. You'll need understand timeline implications of a "for cause" or "without cause" termination. It's also important that you are able to answer the question, how long does the legacy vendor have to continue performing services once they have been notified their contract will be terminated?

"You'll want to identify per the existing contract, if the existing provider is re-

quired to give transitional services,” Dulitz said. “You may even want to amend the agreement to include these transition services.” Certainly, a strained Hub will add substantial stress to your new provider as they begin taking over.

Finally, when assessing the legacy provider, you’ll need to know who owns the rights to key Hub infrastructure, intellectual property (i.e. data, phone/fax lines, web URLs, web portal code/content, standard operating procedures, program correspondence, etc.

### In with the new

When assessing a new vendor, you’ll want to think in terms of your brand’s goals and objectives, explained Dulitz. The capabilities and culture of vendors will be vital in your decision-making. Time is of the essence as you consider your options and you will need to weigh whether you have the time and resources to develop and review a comprehensive request for proposal? Additionally, determining whether your future vendor can hire and train staff to support your program quickly enough for the transition will be vital. It will be important to consider the track record of success with transitioning other Hub programs of potential vendors?

As the transition begins, a standard practice is to identify a core transition team from your legacy vendor and the new vendor in order to establish communication cadence. In doing this, you’ll be able to create a detailed transition plan with key milestones and contingency plans if something doesn’t go as planned.

### Contingencies - did we plan for this?

The importance of planning cannot be overstated, and you will want to consider and be ready for as many contingencies as possible as the transition takes hold.

## Assessing new partners



Do you have the time and resources to develop and review a comprehensive RFP?

How quickly can the vendor hire and train staff to support my program? Will all the staff be new or a mixture of tenured + new staff?

Do prospective vendors possess specific characteristics or capabilities I am looking for (i.e. field nursing, integrated financial assistance...)

How many potential new partners should I consider?

Have vendors demonstrated a defined process and track record of success with transitioning other HUB programs?

Does the vendor have a team of dedicated, cross functional resources to help with project managing the transition process?

Is there IT team capable of mapping and importing legacy vendor’s data to ensure continuity of HUB reporting?

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One example of critical contingency situation might be if your fax lines don’t cut over as planned on the scheduled day. Yes, it’s 2016 and we’re still talking about fax lines, but you will want to have a back up plan for moving vital data in a case like this.

Or consider a slightly longer-term contingency, noted Dulitz. What if your legacy provider underestimated potential volume and your brand reaches unexpected levels following the switch? A problem you probably would be happy to have! You’ll want to have provisions in your new vendor agreement addressing such a situation. The agreement might, for example, include a provision to add staff.

Leading up to and throughout the transition, you’ll want to have an open line of communication with key stakeholders, patients, providers and your own sales force. “Groups that transition well set expectations and communicate them,” noted Dulitz. It might be necessary to put out high-level correspon-

dence to existing patients. In addition, you could choose to produce a webinar for your internal sales personnel in order to set expectations. They may be concerned around, for example, enrolling patients during the transition and expectation leveling for them will be a key concern.

### Summary

Change makes people anxious. If you are considering a change, it is quite possible that existing limitations of your current Hub, its overall performance and the resulting patient experience, are substantially holding back your brand. Given the importance of a patient assistance Hub system towards a brand’s performance, a change might be the beginning of your solution. It will be key to understand your existing contracts and operate towards a smooth breakup accordingly. A calm exit along with careful contingency planning will be vital for a seamless transition that will set your new vendor up for success, and your brand for growth.