



Reclaiming Capacity | Solving Healthcare  
IT's Staffing Challenge



Outdated staffing assumptions and prolonged reliance on lean IT models have resulted in a structural capacity deficit for healthcare IT teams. How do IT teams innovate for the future, when they are already tasked with plugging today's holes and patching yesterday's technology?

In this e-book, you will learn:

- How lean IT and rigid staffing ratios limit the effectiveness of healthcare IT teams
- Where healthcare IT team capacity is actually spent
- How reframing around capacity can multiply the team's ability to perform more high-value work
- How increased IT capacity can improve clinical outcomes

#### Meet the Authors



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## Lean IT: Not as Efficient as It Seems

Many healthcare leaders assume that lean IT must somehow be inherently efficient.

In reality, they aren't running lean IT by choice. Rather, they are structurally constrained by the factors that can shape IT hiring: staffing models, budgets, and rigid ratios.

While at first glance lean IT may offer some efficiencies, the impacts go far beyond immediate satisfaction of pre-ordained ratios. They spill over into burnout, turnover, and operational risk within clinical and administrative workflows.

Lean IT is too often mandated by formulas, not strategy. Tying staffing ratios to beds or patients is a prime example. And the effects are far reaching.

Being "lean" increasingly means lean in skills, experience, and institutional knowledge – not simply headcount. When institutional memory goes out the door, retraining adds time and expense, and the penalties are felt throughout the enterprise: delays in issue resolution, increased

interruptions for clinicians and front-line staff, and greater risk exposure from unpatched or poorly monitored systems.

CIOs are worried about the impact. In a recent study, resource strain and retaining budget for IT resources are ranked as top concerns.<sup>1</sup>

And what began as a well-intentioned quest for IT efficiency suddenly becomes quite the opposite.

59%

of CIOs cite enhancing team performance as their top challenge, while 53% worry about creating development opportunities for existing staff. Meanwhile 34% say retaining talent is a challenge.<sup>2</sup>

17%

of CIOs anticipate increasing team size via external consultants,<sup>2</sup> highlighting an enormous gap between need and action.



## The Reality: Where IT Capacity is Actually Spent

Overloaded teams. Low-value operational work. Welcome to today's reality in healthcare IT.

There's the work your team is capable of and the work they're actually doing. The majority of IT effort in healthcare is spent on low-value tasks: monitoring and maintaining infrastructure, security alerts, and patching, and keeping existing systems running.

It's essential work but performed at an enormous opportunity cost because those low-end demands don't scale with a limited staff.

An assessment of available man-hours reveals important gaps:

- Available IT labor hours vs. required operational workload
- After hours work as a signal of chronic undercapacity, not poor prioritization

These misdirected resources are not a matter of simple inefficiency. Too often, structural overload is preventing healthcare IT teams from realizing their full potential.

In a 2024 Bain & Company survey, healthcare providers' top priorities were infrastructure/cybersecurity and clinical workflow optimization, again pointing to an emphasis on system maintenance and short-term challenges rather than future planning.<sup>3</sup>

Not surprising when you consider that 96% of hospitals are running at least some end-of-life legacy systems, which increases both the maintenance burden and operational risk.<sup>4</sup>

When low-value tasks overtake capacity, healthcare organizations begin to defer high-value tasks that offer the greatest long-term impact: architecture refreshes, workflow optimization, training and knowledge transfer.

80%

of IT budgets are now consumed by maintenance and "keeping the lights on," leaving only 20% for innovation.<sup>4</sup>



## A Powerful Alternative: Workforce Multiplication Through Capacity Reallocation

Workforce multiplication as a strategic model changes the healthcare IT conversation from rigid ratios to actual business impact. Too often, IT outsourcing has been viewed in terms of mere cost savings rather than the empowerment of lean IT teams to deliver on higher-value tasks.

Perhaps that empowerment is why 73% of CIOs report using or considering interim or on-demand leadership to accelerate their own implementations and innovation.<sup>5</sup>

When managed and expert services are viewed as a means of changing how IT time is spent, not who is employed, the focus changes to continuity, specialization, and enabling internal teams to operate at a higher level.

Today, 50% of CIOs rank clinician end-user education and knowledge transfer as their top IT support priority, reinforcing the need to free capacity for enablement work.<sup>6</sup>

What benefits can managed IT services bring to a lean IT healthcare environment?

- Continuity despite internal IT staff turnover
- Faster onboarding and reduced rediscovery time
- Access to unique skills that can be difficult to hire and retain internally

This approach to staffing can support greater skills development for internal teams, reduced burnout among team members – and crucially, more predictable and consistent operational outcomes.

For many healthcare organizations, adding to internal staff simply isn't a realistic option. In a recent WittKieffer study, only 38% of CIOs anticipate increases in headcount, reinforcing the need for non-headcount-based capacity strategies.<sup>5</sup>



## The Organizational Payoff: A Return to Healthcare's Core Mission

Technology in all its forms is simply a means to an end: equipping clinicians to deliver the highest-quality care to the thousands of patients who depend on their skills and expertise.

A reframed and enlightened approach to IT capacity – and judicious use of external expertise like managed IT services – lead to large dividends in stability and productivity and an improved user experience for both patients and staff.

When IT teams regain capacity, the promise of connected care comes to life throughout the organization. Benefits extend far beyond IT metrics into clinical efficiency, workforce well-being, and organizational confidence. When less time is spent responding to low-value tasks, the results lead to more predictable operations and greater trust between IT and clinical teams.

And when IT teams can be more responsive, it leads to fewer workflow interruptions, a higher degree of clinical uptime, and better adoption of clinical tools across the organization.

At the intersection of healthcare and technology, the only constant is change. New treatments and stunning new possibilities arrive daily. Successful healthcare organizations will be staffed and prepared to embrace what's next. AI-enabled workflows will become a routine part of every patient encounter. Digital patient engagement and compliance becomes more important than ever. And growing concerns about security will require continuous vigilance.



## To Recap

How do lean IT models reduce healthcare IT effectiveness?

Burnout, turnover, and operational risk.

Where is healthcare IT capacity actually spent today?

80% of IT budgets are consumed by maintenance and low-value tasks.

What is workforce multiplication in healthcare IT?

Changing the focus from rote staffing formulas to growing meaningful IT capacity.

How can increased IT capacity improve clinical outcomes?

Clinical efficiency, workforce well-being, reduced turnover, improved patient experience.

How can healthcare organizations create capacity for connected care?

By looking beyond staffing ratios to how IT hours are actually spent, and increasing time spent on high-value work.



## Creating the Capacity for Connected Care

Workforce multiplication can be a powerful force for good in the healthcare enterprise. When management looks beyond ratios and begins to focus on how IT hours are truly being spent, it creates the opportunity to empower IT staff to perform more high-value work and offload low-value tasks to a trusted partner.

If your healthcare IT organization needs solutions to create the capacity for connected care, register for our webinar “Reclaiming Capacity: Are Lean IT Models Holding Healthcare Back?” featuring C Spire Business Technology's Cole Two Bears, VP of Managed Services, and Brian Collier, Senior Systems Engineer.

In the 45-minute discussion, they'll share best practices about how IT leaders can assess their team's true capacity and the practical ways they can reclaim strategic bandwidth without increasing headcount.