Making Innovation Stick: It All Comes Down to Relationships

Healthcare IT News editor-in-chief Tom Sullivan authored a great piece earlier this week on his top takeaways from the Population Health Forum 2017 in Boston. All four are worth a read — but one stuck out to us in particular: Creating a Culture of Innovation. As noted innovation enthusiasts, we at CNSI can directly relate to the approach presented by New York University Langone Medical Center Director, Leora Horwitz, MD.

HOW TO MAKE INNOVATION STICK

1. Choose/implement an intervention.
2. Find a champion.
3. Keep the champion.
4. Understand the value-add of intervention.
5. Tailor your approach accordingly.

For example, Dr. Horwitz stresses the importance of working directly with frontline end-users from the very beginning. Too often, tech specialists forget that they have users at the end of a process. If a doctor or other care providers doesn't have a need for a product or won't use it because of poor design, what good is it? As Horwitz puts it, "The most successful interventions to improve care delivery share some hallmarks. They're user-centered, incorporating input from the frontline

end-users. They're designed to fit workflow." [Apple](), a company that provides over a million apps in their [App store](), [gives similar advice]() to wannabe app developers: "If you're app doesn't do something useful, unique or provide entertainment…it may not be accepted."

Her second and third steps, however, are (ironically) quite innovative in their own right: find and keep champions.

It's all too easy to get caught up in a seemingly effective product and move directly from design to implementation. But, Horwitz points out, this skips a crucial step: finding—and keeping—support from your stakeholders. Depending on type of product, this may mean educating users, soliciting feedback and encouraging further adoption. Even the most innovative product on the planet is doomed to fail if the users never get around to giving it a try and the designers don't refine their solution based on feedback.

The lesson? Don't rest on the laurels of a good idea or even a good design. Constantly maintain relationships with end users who will be the voice of your innovation in the field. Yes, they can be your worst critic, but this feedback may actually help you create your best product yet!