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**HIPAA 5010 tools come to the fore**

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A raft of vendors this year has released tools to help companies meet the forthcoming HIPAA 5010 mandate. A common theme: Most vendors claim to handle everything from testing through compliance – but accomplishing that will take tools and more.

HIPAA 5010 is something of an EDI precursor to ICD-10. "Compared to ICD-10, 5010 isn't that difficult," says Janice Young, a program director of IDC Health Insights. "It's relatively straightforward but it is expensive and time-consuming."

Vendors quite naturally are rushing to help ease that transition. Earlier this month two companies forged an alliance around testing and compliance, and two other vendors offered services of their own.

HIPAA QA and Grid-Tools Limited partnered to build an X12N/HIPAA module that works with both HIPAA QA's HIPAAAdvanced test data management service and Grid-Tools Datamaker test data management solution to deliver test data generation that integrates with automation tools to include X12N transaction sets, data relationships, legacy data formats and HIPAA 5010 file inter-dependencies, according to the companies.

Also this month, Technosoft unveiled Healthcare IT Compliance Services, while MindLeaf announced its own 5010 conversion services. Technosoft claimed that it can help customers plan, implement, and execute on the transition to HIPAA 5010 and ICD-10. The company described Healthcare IT Compliance Services as enabling "improved performance with data driven decision making for case management, disease management, utilization management, insured population management and revenue cycle management," in a prepared statement. MindLeaf's marketing literature boasts that its HIPAA 5010 services build on the company's expertise with EDI and HIPAA 4010 conversion as well as its methodology and compliance procedures.

In late January, meanwhile, both Axiom Systems and Edifecs detailed new wares.

Axiom noted the general release of its HIPAA 5010 tools, which the company says guide healthcare organizations in testing the business impacts of 5010. For its part, Edifecs detailed what it dubbed a "Unified Channel" vision for healthcare under which it offers software for HIPAA 5010 compliance and visibility.

Those are just the tools and services to manifest during the early weeks of 2010. The likes of Infosys, Ingenix Consulting, McKesson's RelayHealth unit and others also offer a range of HIPAA 5010 offerings.

WEDI launched a **resource directory** in mid-February that lists ICD-10 vendors, many of whom also pack HIPAA 5010 tools and services. And the Data Interchange Standards Association last September launched **DISAcert**, online testing to help users comply with the HIPAA 5010 transaction standards.

Testing and compliance tools are important but they're not a panacea, says Mike Arrigo, CEO of consultancy No World Borders, which has a healthcare unit with HIPAA and ICD-10 services. "It's one thing to be compliant, it's another to make sure all those systems work together in a production environment with real claims situations," Arrigo points out.

To reach that end, IDC's Young recommends that prospective customers "really make sure the partnership they have with a tools vendor matches their own corporate priorities, business model, and data model. And then customers still have to go through and verify everything."

The deadline to comply with HIPAA 5010 is January 1, 2012.

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