HL7 Strategies

These strategies are adopted by HL7:

- Develop coherent, extendible standards that permit structured, encoded healthcare information of the type required to support patient care, to be exchanged between computer applications, while preserving the meaning.
- Develop a formal methodology to support the creation of HL7 standards from the HL7 Reference Information Model (RIM).
- Educate the healthcare industry, policy makers, and the general public concerning the benefits of healthcare information standardization generally, and HL7 standards specifically.
- Promote the use of HL7 standards worldwide through the creation of HL7 International Affiliate organizations, which participate in developing HL7 standards and which localize HL7 standards, as required.
- Stimulate, encourage and facilitate domain experts from healthcare industry stakeholder organizations to participate in HL7 to develop healthcare information standards in their area of expertise.
- Collaborate with other standards development organizations and national and international sanctioning bodies (e.g., ANSI and ISO), in both the healthcare and information infrastructure domains, to promote the use of supportive and compatible standards.
- Collaborate with healthcare information technology users to ensure that HL7 standards meet real-world requirements, and that appropriate standards development efforts are initiated by HL7 to meet emergent requirements.
- Develop system functional models to help guide the industry on the essential requirements for electronic health record and personal health record systems.

HL7 has interoperability as a goal. This statement is supported in the mission statement for a number of the HL7 Technical Committees (TC) and Special Interest Groups (SIG) where you will often find the term interoperable or interoperability. Whether or not this goal is being achieved depends on the definition for interoperability that one is using, and the level or type of interoperability that is desired.

While the term “interoperability” is frequently used within the HL7 and HIT communities, it is often done with ambiguous or different meanings and contexts, which has been a barrier to the ability of the industry to maximize utilization of technology to improve healthcare.

Why Define Interoperability?
Different assumptions about what interoperability is can result in profound differences in what we do, when we do it, how resources are distributed, and which goals are met (if, in fact, they are met at all). Our definitions of interoperability dramatically affect how data is stored and used, and how software is designed. If we don't understand the context for the information, how can we use it in the translational or clinical research process? In the May 2005 HIMSS Insider, Ed Larson expressed it this way:

**Technical Interoperability** is concerned with the conveyance of payload. It neutralizes the effect of distance, is domain independent (OSI levels 1-6), and is fundamentally based on Information Theory - Shannon (1948).

**Semantic Interoperability** communicates meaning unambiguously, using Codes, Identifiers and Context. It is Domain-specific (OSI Level 7) and is needed to understand, interpret and use data.

**Process Interoperability** enables shared human understanding that is needed to coordinate work processes and enable business systems to interoperate. It is essential if interoperability is to provide any benefits in the work place.