

# **VTE™ Services: How to Dramatically and Affordably Expand Your Healthcare Organization's Capabilities**

*A Conversation with Medicus IT's Bryan Jarvis*



**MEDICUS IT**



**Many healthcare organizations struggle to find and retain high-quality IT staff. In addition, they lack the experience and expertise to leverage IT as a strategic asset that improves service and manages expenses. However, Medicus IT Virtual Technology Executive Bryan Jarvis insists that a virtual technology executive (VTE™) solution can bridge those gaps.**

More specifically, he notes that strategic use of VTEs can be an innovative way to help drive higher quality service, lower administrative loads on staff, cost savings, and improvements in employee, patient, and caregiver satisfaction. We spoke with him to take a deeper dive into this compelling topic.

**Thanks for joining us today, Bryan. Just in case any of our readers don't know what a VTE is, please define the service and explain how it's different from a consultant or a temporary CIO or CTO.**

Let's start at the beginning. Many healthcare organizations don't have the size or the budget for a CIO. Or they can't find a CIO who understands the demands facing healthcare organizations. Likewise, "healthcare IT consultant" usually means someone who understands IT or healthcare, but not both.

VTEs are fundamentally different. Think of it this way: By definition, VTEs combine extensive IT knowledge, deep healthcare expertise, business acumen, and common-sense human intelligence to deliver comprehensive strategic advisory solutions that do not exist anywhere else in the industry.





While they can be individuals, they also can be full teams. Or those teams might be assembled as needed. VTEs also look at healthcare IT as a strategic asset – something that helps the organization increase its capabilities and decrease its risks and expenses over time.

So, VTEs represent a scalable resource with a unique and comprehensive combination of healthcare and IT knowledge. From leadership to planning to implementation, the VTE offers strategic guidance, enhanced operational efficiency and ultimately, transformative solutions, helping your team deliver a better IT experience. The VTE becomes part of the fabric of your organization, seamlessly delivering what you need, when you need it.

### **How does a VTE differ from a consultant?**

Great question. Consultants typically come in to solve specific problems. VTEs look at multiple operational challenges and build a plan to address everything holistically – now and moving forwards. Your VTE provides guidance throughout this process, giving you a single point of contact who understands your community, your goals, your team, and your objectives.

### **Let's break that down further. What, specifically, does a VTE do?**

VTEs help your organization run better. That encompasses optimization, reliability, and repeatable outcomes. And it starts with a smarter, more strategic approach to investment. Are we spending the right way? Are we forecasting our future spend accurately? Will these purchases reduce downtime and improve outcomes?



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Another way to put it is that VTEs help your team see the forest rather than the trees. That's especially important for health centers which don't have deep strategic IT capabilities on their own. In other words, pretty much any healthcare organization.

### **What challenges do VTEs help solve that might surprise people?**

Burnout immediately comes to mind. Running technology operations for health centers is challenging. And the pay rarely matches what IT leadership might make in other industries. And then it goes even deeper into the organization. For example, when the infrastructure doesn't work, the front desk or call centers can't process patient intake and workflow properly. Staff gets frustrated. Patients get angry. Turnover ensues across the organization.

VTEs help identify practical, affordable steps to implement so that people, processes, and technology simply work. That also includes documentation and training. The organization gets to focus on healthcare without worrying about the phones or internet security or any of hundreds of elements that might disrupt daily operations.

If you want to get granular about things, little details really add up. Can we reduce clicks to complete a task? How about logins? Are our processes uniform across all our systems and locations? In the exam room, is the Provider oriented towards the patient or facing away towards a big computer terminal? VTEs help put staff and patients first.





**At this point, I'd imagine some of our readers are thinking, "Every healthcare organization is unique. How can a VTE possibly understand my team's needs?"**

That's easy. The best VTEs come from healthcare IT backgrounds. They have the breadth and depth of experience to anticipate many of your challenges. Plus, they know how to listen and get to know your team as an essential part of the process – from the beginning and over time.

It all comes down to your community. Do you have grant dollars? Do you need to apply for grant dollars? What's your budget cycle? Do you have an IT lifecycle approach? These are plain-English, business-oriented conversations that help set realistic goals and develop practical plans for ongoing IT success. It starts at the executive level and drills down from there.

**But can a VTE really drive measurable value?**

It absolutely can. Let's look at a call center. A call center becomes value-based if it's regarded as a valuable asset for the organization. While that sounds obvious, organizations that take this approach know how to prevent or minimize downtime across that call center.

By being ready for power outages, cyberattacks, new staff, even moves to new locations, the call center becomes more valuable for the healthcare center because of its reliability and availability. VTEs know how to make that happen – where to spend the money, where not to spend money, how to generate the most efficiency and effectiveness out of every IT investment.





## **Then there's everyone's love-hate topic – regulatory documentation and compliance.**

Oh, yes. That's an essential area where a VTE's deep knowledge of healthcare IT delivers value. There are administrative safeguards, physical safeguards, technical safeguards – they all must be in place. Elements such as HIPAA impact every operational process. At the same time, privacy and security must be balanced with streamlined, authorized access which doesn't slow the Practice down.

Done properly and strategically, the IT infrastructure can automate information flow, access control, and regulatory documentation. That frees staff to focus on patients. Better yet, this approach helps manage risk more effectively, with IT helping the organization adapt to changing regulations with minimal disruption to day-to-day activities.

## **How do you help a healthcare organization overcome bad experiences with external partnerships in the past?**

We start by reminding them that this isn't your standard external partnership. Remember – VTEs used to be those people keeping the lights on and the systems running. They know how, to use an analogy, to fix the engines on the airplane while it's flying at 30,000 feet. They understand the challenges that come from IT upgrades and repairs while patients continue to come through the front doors.

Here's another key difference with VTEs. They also understand the staff frustrations that come from down time or training on new systems. And, by definition, they remain as part of your team for each of these transitions. So, they have the know-how, the experience, and the incentive to do things that make every evolution as easy on your staff as possible. The traditional consulting model simply isn't built for that type of ongoing support and empathy.







## It all sounds great – but can a VTE really help support our mission?

The simple answer is, "yes." The more appropriate answer is that the VTE will identify the areas your organization needs to prioritize its spending to achieve its goals. If your budgets are constrained, the VTE helps prioritize what needs to be done first, second, third. Then perhaps the VTE might help secure grants or donations for additional improvements.

Obviously, a VTE costs less than a full-time hire of an individual, certainly of an entire team. The better way to look at it that the VTE expense should, and almost always does, pay for itself by helping your organization reach its IT and services objectives in the most reasonable, cost-effective means possible. You'll spend, yes, but you'll spend much less than if you tried a different approach.

For example, a consultant might have a relationship with a technology vendor. So that consultant is likely to point out that older desktops in exam rooms are no longer considered state of the art and recommend upgrades. Probably with their partner vendor, and likely with a discount. That sounds like a good deal. But – and this is significant – a VTE, by looking at the bigger picture, might recommend investing in a smaller fleet of mobile workstations to serve Providers and clinical staff both in and out of the exam room. The VTE's number one priority is the overall mission's success and wellbeing, not sales of some external product.



***The VTE helps prioritize what needs to be done first, second, third.***






### **Should the VTE be part of our executive team?**

Absolutely. Remember – VTEs enable a strategic approach to healthcare IT. So, the VTE can help the management team make essential, core decisions, such as how technology can better support patient engagement – in the exam room, when communicating with the front office, when connecting with outside entities, etc.

The VTE helps management step back and think about those old desktops and what it might be like using tablets instead. What else might be possible with a WiFi system capable of supporting those tablets? Are there grants available to fund this transition? If so, how to we apply?

### **VTEs aren't providers, and IT isn't medicine. So, how does a VTE partnership help deliver higher quality care and better outcomes?**

That's always an important question. The best answer is that VTEs help healthcare organizations learn to use IT to keep the focus on the patient. Healthcare experts spend their time on treatments and outcomes rather than feeling like they must become IT experts themselves just to get through their workday. Patients get the information and direction they need to get well, faster and more transparently.

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*It's that combination of what-if and make-it-happen that VTEs bring to leadership. They understand how technology can change an entire organization's direction.*





Let's look at another example. Consider an e-prescription system that takes too long to find a prescribed prescription or process the payment details. If that system has 2000 medications that the organization hasn't prescribed in three years, maybe the center should concentrate instead on the 50 or so that cover 98% of what's needed on a typical day. That's a strategic IT decision that cuts across all parts of the organization. VTEs are ideally positioned to help make that call and plan that transition.

It all goes back to what we discussed earlier. Save time by improving processes and accessibility. Build better security. Develop redundancy when critical systems go offline. Reduce staff burnout and turnover.

### **That's a great explanation. Where does one go to find a VTE?**

That would be Medicus IT. Yes, I work for them. But I work for them because they created this model for the healthcare world. We've built this program with superior talent, and we have a long track record of results, satisfied customers, and long-standing, ongoing relationships. And if we're not the right VTE for you, we'll help direct you to the resources you need – without the biases that limit most consultants.

***Ready to explore what VTEs could do for your organization? Contact Medicus IT today. With over 35 years of VTE experience and success, we're ready to help you transform your organization with the direction and partnership you need to thrive.***

For more information please  
visit us at **MedicusIT.com**



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