

Disparities In Technology, “Can’t We All Just Get Connected?”

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Providers of research within NAPBS often take great strides towards communicating effectively with their client base. Whether it’s day-to-day issues in operations, or a customer service situation, pro-active and clearly defined communication is one of the best methods to establish trust and rapport with a client.

One aspect of communication that’s always been a major point of interest between research providers and CRAs is that of secure data transmission. Simply put, how is the highly sensitive information this industry deals with, being sent back and forth between groups? From the provider’s perspective, there exists a great disparity in how this is accomplished, and there are several reasons why simply having a technological solution in place for data transmission can greatly improve the relationship between vendors and CRAs.

It’s understood that many CRAs prefer to focus efforts towards building ‘front-end’ integrations, directly with their client base. This certainly appeases the client, but in order to fully provide the end-user with the best background check possible, the entire process must be streamlined for efficiency. How can this be accomplished, though, from the provider’s perspective?

The ability for providers and CRAs to ‘speak’ directly between each other’s systems creates a solid and secure base for information transfer. No longer are faxes lost in space, or e-mails bounced back due to size constraints. The rate of human error that exists in entering manually processing 100% of the information from a request/result is immediately reduced when having a full system-to-system integration between companies. Truth be told, there are numerous groups that are currently completely incapable of offering this solution to their vendor network.

Around this time last year, I published an article in the NAPBS journal that spotlighted groups in our industry that were dedicated to supplying CRAs with technological solutions, which included options for integrating with their research provider network. Groups such as AccioData, BackChecked, ClearStar, deverus, FRS, ISS, and TazWorks all provide this opportunity to CRAs. However, when shifting focus away from these groups and the services they provide, this is where the disparity amongst groups and their ability to process data, securely, truly begins to show itself.

Many groups also have the option to integrate directly with their research network through custom XML or FTP solutions, often aimed at providing a highly customized solution they can directly manage in times where troubleshooting occurs. This is certainly a viable option, but an important note is that these integrations can sometimes

take weeks or even months to reach completion. Other times the process is relatively fast, and with very little time needed to fully connect. This can vary between integrations, as each one is custom in nature, and requires immediate assistance from a member of an IT staff.

It's at this juncture where the natural disparity between groups becomes problematic, and can affect the overall quality of a product that a CRA is selling to their client base. Beyond working with background screening technology partners, or having the option to integrate directly with researchers through a custom portal, there are still many companies, small and large, that have zero potential to integrate directly with their researcher network. Again, this puts the research provider into a position where processing all work on a manual basis will greatly increase the overall TAT, and also promote instances where data entry mistakes can be made. We're all human after all, and we all make mistakes. If this weren't the case, our industry probably wouldn't exist in the first place, would it? Yet many groups feel that research providers should be held to a perfect standard in servicing their client base, without any technological assistance in place.

If any individual reading this article is affiliated with a group that has zero potential for establishing a direct integration with a vendor or CRA, please take the time to reach out to the companies with NAPBS that are the experts (AccioData, BackChecked, ClearStar, deverus, FRS, ISS, and TazWorks). Their information can be found in the NAPBS Directory, and many of them will be exhibiting at the Mid-Year Conference in Atlanta. Please also investigate if your current IT Staff has the ability to write specifications for XML or FTP transfer, amongst your research provider network. You are doing your client base a favor by allowing a superior and more secure background check to be performed, which is ultimately the biggest selling point for all groups in our industry.