It is one thing to recognize the potential benefits of a technology, but it's another thing entirely to become comfortable enough to use it with any frequency. That's where we find many clinical trial professionals today.

Clearly, it's important for vendors and other proponents of technology to help educate and inspire those who aren't early adopters.

Evidence abounds. A 2017 survey of 466 sites worldwide from DrugDev found that, while many sponsors were excited about leveraging new technologies, they were flummoxed by several factors, including:

- The difficulty and/or time required for training on the tech (with 60 percent saying it is “sometimes,” “often,” or “all the time” a barrier)
- An app associated with the tech is too hard/not intuitive (55 percent said it was sometimes, often, or all the time a barrier)
- The tech is too time-consuming to use vs. paper/e-mail/fax (53 percent sometimes, often, or all the time a barrier)

On the positive side, it's also worth noting that the “human factor” isn't a significant hurdle—at least not yet. According to the survey, about two-thirds of responding sites reported their staffs were “rarely or never resistant to learning new technologies.”

However, we can squander user openness if we don’t quickly develop technologies that are user friendly. Vendors and other developers of new technologies in the clinical trial space must also win over a sometimes-tough site constituency.

In these early days of advanced technology usage, sponsors are looking for trusted site partners. Sites that resist could find their business operations threatened as more and more sponsors look to the sites that demonstrate they can leverage tech innovations in improved, efficient, or studies.

For example, the adoption of mobile data collection, mobile visits, smartphones, and wearable sensor trial participants don’t (always) need to look back to the future. The result? The preferred sites for more studies will be those with the flexibility to work with decentralized subject populations, and those sponsor sites will likely be funded for many studies.

Finally, let’s not let the promise of technology run amok. We can let it become the false that at their worst level, clinical trials are about people. In fact, good old-fashioned, in-person contact remains far and away the most effective engagement tactic, according to a 2018 survey of clinical research professionals from SCORR Marketing and Applied Clinical Trials.

For example, the adoption of mobile data collection, mobile visits, smartphones, and wearable sensor trials means trial participants don’t always need to trek out to a site. The result?

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