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Accelerate Performance

Top Five Ways to Improve Quality By Connecting Technology Systems

1 Be innovative – be a meaningful user.

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, hospitals and healthcare organizations are being offered financial incentives to become “meaningful users” of certified electronic health record (EHR) technology. A hospital shall be considered a meaningful user if they: (1) demonstrate use of certified EHR technology in a meaningful manner; (2) demonstrate that the EHR technology provides for the electronic exchange of health information; and 3) provides information on clinical quality measures. The definition is vague by design and opens the door to creativity. It encourages HIT providers and hospitals to be innovative in their solutions but united in the goal of improved healthcare quality.



#2 Eliminate paper and be green.

Unlike any other industry, healthcare is fundamentally document-based and has always been that way. At the core of the healthcare delivery system is the medical record which captures and stores patient information and medical history. Rather than moving paper documents from one hospital to another, or between departments, or from a patient's home to a laboratory appointment, wouldn't it be more efficient and effective to store this information in an electronic medical record and move it electronically to where it needs to go, at a moment's notice and with the push of a button. A process improvement workflow platform allows you to capture and store documents in a repository, so that the patient record can flow seamlessly between processes and departments – from registration to clinical process to final billing – whether all under one roof or at several locations.



#3 Start small, think big.

By using process templates or building your own, begin connecting your technology systems one step at a time. With workflow technology, you can optimize one business process at a time, linking the technology systems across your hospital, and then build from your successes. Using a process template as a starting point, customize the process based on the unique rules of your hospital. Make your technology conform to your hospital's processes, not the other way around.

#4 Be operational and sustainable.

Hospital processes do not operate in a silo – they move across different clinical and administrative departments, among numerous hospital personnel, and often between multiple healthcare providers. At the core of a hospital's system infrastructure must be the electronic exchange of information between different point applications. In many hospitals, these systems simply do not “talk” to each other, creating a barrier to providing high quality healthcare. The exchange of health information, not just maintaining this data in a system, is key to the definition of meaningful use. Exchange of information empowers healthcare providers with knowledge at the point of care, reduces duplication of effort, and, most importantly, increases patient safety by ensuring that all providers treating the patient know everything they need to know about the patient.



#5 Don't forget the process.

It is imperative that your hospital develop an enterprise-wide vision that sets the strategy from the top of the organization down to the thousands of processes that support it. However, the work itself must begin from the bottom up. Take a close look at each and every process in every department and uncover the pain points. Utilize workflow solutions to eliminate these pain points, process by process, each time bringing you closer to the enterprise vision.