

Smooth Transition

Practical steps for migrating to a new enterprise-wide information system.

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There are many benefits to implementing new technology and automation; however, an organization faced with change must insure that the return on investment offsets the cost of a new system.

To protect your investment and garner all of the benefits, your organization can take steps to make sure the implementation of a new system is successful.

Once completed, you may get a chance to look back and ask: "How did we ever get by without this?"

LEADERSHIP

The leader of the implementation process combines each level of the process with an understanding of the organization's daily business issues. He or she must secure the confidence of a team of trainers, nurses, business office managers, accountants and all departments that will use the system. The leader is a cheerleader—the one who never lets go of the project's goals and takes complete ownership to instill that same feeling among the entire organization.

PLAN OF ACTION

In the hustle and bustle of daily job responsibilities, many important factors of system implementation seem burdensome and get overlooked. Some of them, as obvious as staff training, can become quite challenging when you have dozens or even hundreds of facilities in multiple states.

To address this, develop a plan of action and educate everyone who will be involved in both implementation and system use. Strict adherence to deadlines and advance notice of tasks, dates and goals will keep everyone in the loop.

STANDARDIZE

Changing to a new clinical or financial system creates an opportunity to standardize regulations, policies and procedures, forms, assessments and workflow. While this may be more difficult for multi-site or multi-service

organizations, standardization brings a consistency to workflow, training and data that makes reporting and managerial access to information consistent across all facilities.

A multi-site organization could test the new system in a pilot facility or a group of facilities could go live simultaneously. If there are many sites, it may be easier to get a volunteer or pick a pilot facility to be first.

Once your organization converts, leaving the old system behind with a mandate to fully use the one will make the transition easier.

TRAINING

Training is crucial to a successful rollout of any application. It's no secret that all clinicians are very busy, but training is compromised when pagers go off every five minutes and staff members are leaving to make phone calls. Try to have adequate coverage for all staff to insure uninterrupted training. Have extra long, frequent breaks so staff can check back and handle critical issues. Be prepared for training and train when everyone, including the system, is ready.

BE POSITIVE

Keep a positive attitude. Some employees will fight any change, so it's important to determine if someone has a valid, resolvable problem, or if they are just a chronic complainer.

Confront negative staff quickly and remind everyone of the new system's benefits. An integrated information system should touch everyone in an organization, but benefits differ according to each employee's position. For example, real-time access to facility information for a corporate user is not viewed as a benefit for an end-user at a facility. Explain relevant benefits to each level of employees.

While the return on investment of any new information system is difficult to determine, a successful implementation will bring the goals to reality, increase user satisfaction and ultimately benefit patients. ☞

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