

Successful EMR Implementation: It's More About "How You Manage People"

By selecting the right internal leadership team, focusing on good communications, creating a detailed project plan, setting realistic measurable goals, and devoting sufficient time for deployment and training, your move from paper-based documents to an electronic system can be a smooth transition.



By First Insight Corporation, www.first-insight.com

Now that you've decided to implement a practice-wide EMR and practice management system, don't forget to focus on one of the most important ingredients for a successful outcome—selecting your EMR implementation project team.

Moving to a new system takes time, patience and commitment. As with any new process, it often requires a change in employee attitudes and behaviors. According to business strategist Peter Senge, *"People don't resist change. They resist being changed!"* Even though they may agree with the concept, many have a low tolerance for change.

Poor planning, poor communication, and poor training can lead to unwelcome results if you set unrealistic expectations and close the communication gap with your staff. W. Edwards Deming once said, *"Individuals don't accomplish anything, teams do."*

So how can you get off to a good start? Let's examine three critical steps that will help guide you as you select your team and transition from a paper-based office to an electronic medical records system.

Step 1: Planning

- ✓ **Designate a project manager** (doctor, office manager or office administrator). This person should have the skills, training and time to form, lead and facilitate groups. He/she will also develop the project plan, coordinate and track the implementation issues, deficiencies, decisions, and tasks assigned by your team members.
- ✓ **Form a project team/committee** with people who will embrace change, contribute enthusiastically, and have the respect of their peers. Implementing an EMR system should not be driven solely by IT—implementation requires the involvement and commitment from every level of your practice.
- ✓ **Define and set realistic measurable project goals and objectives.** Prioritize them based on what will provide the most value to your practice.
- ✓ **Identify what resources you need,** including budgets, people and timelines. Develop a clear definition/goal of what you want the EMR system to accomplish. Make

decisions based on the process that supports your goals and objectives.

- ✓ **Analyze every function of every job** to understand how your staff accomplished those tasks with your old system.
- ✓ **Develop a comprehensive data map** of office workflows and processes, including office modifications, hardware installations, software configurations, backup systems, and entering old patient data into the new EMR system.
- ✓ **Visit at least one or two optometry practices** that implemented the software you are considering. Meet with doctors and high-level users and talk about their experiences. If you don't have time to visit their office, take the time to speak with key users on the telephone.

Step 2: Communication

- ✓ **Energize your staff.** Always maintain momentum and enthusiasm or you might see some resistance from staff.
- ✓ **Listen to your staff** and let them help you develop a solid plan. People will support what they create.
- ✓ **Ongoing communication is essential**, so communicate with your team at a weekly staff meeting. Use email to develop and refine the implementation plan, discuss issues, and update the progress.
- ✓ **Resolve conflicts effectively by setting goals.** Let your team be honest with their concerns and recommendations. People want to be heard. Agree to disagree—healthy disagreements can build better decisions.

- ✓ **Reinforce that you can't do this alone.** Offer incentives to your staff and address "what's in it for them." If you commit to a success EMR rollout, your staff will move forward with a more positive approach.

Step 3: Training

- ✓ **Invest in your staff and prepare them for change.** Keep an open mind that everyone may not be able to or is willing to adapt to change.
- ✓ **Assess computer and basic keyboarding skills;** some staff may need to attend a basic computer class.
- ✓ **Give your staff time to learn the new software.** Introduce new modules over a four to six month period. If you try to do too much too soon, people will get frustrated and give up.
- ✓ **Invest in onsite software training** for you and your staff. This is not an area where you want to scale back and save money. Make sure your staff knows where to find answers to their questions.

Free Practice Analysis

Ask First Insight how they can help you develop a plan of action, evaluate a return on your investment, and create a smooth-running paperless office with maximEyes practice management and EMR software.

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