### Preparing for Complete Integration of Dictation and Transcription

Increasingly, radiology departments are facing a growth in their procedures performed and need to find ways to adapt, yet continue to provide increased levels of service expected by their referring physician base.  This is true in both hospital and clinic environments.

Too often, one of the biggest backlogs is report finalization, meaning the time it takes to finalize a written report once the radiologist has dictated the results.  To address this major area of cost and backlog, radiology departments and clinics are looking to their RIS/PACS partners to come up with a solution.  Today's fully integrated workflow providers have addressed this issue and generally provide dictation and transcription as part of their product offering, usually with the option of voice recognition.

Though an integral part of the product offering, voice recognition it is not a simple plug and play process.  Thought and planning must precede deployment to ensure the results expected are achieved. A logical sequence should be followed to make this deployment successful. This sequence should include:

**First,** identify a process owner and project manager, then identify all the stakeholders in the new solution and include them in the team to manage the implementation.  For example, include representatives from IS, administration and radiology.  Be sure to have a senior member of the radiology department on the team as the management sponsor.  If your new system is a major change in your organization's infrastructure, support from top management will be critical to ensure project success.

**Second,** identify and map your current reporting process. Start from the time the exam is completed to the time the final report is sent out to the referring physician. It is important to show each step along the way, including who is responsible and what is to be done.  This is also a good time to begin tracking time and costs for each step and identifying current or potential bottlenecks that need to be addressed in deployment of your new system.

**Third**, ask your new vendor to provide a map of its reporting process. This map should be similar to the one completed onsite. This is a critical point in your deployment.  It is important to understand how the new system works and what the new roles and responsibilities will be. Ensure all members of the team understand and buy into where you want to be when you go live. The emphasis here is on letting everyone know how the system will work.

*It is critical to avoid the trap of trying to design the new system to do exactly what you are doing today, only faster!* In other words, don't pave the cow paths. This could be a recipe for disaster at worst, and will negate many of the benefits of your new system at best.  Gain agreement from all the team that the future state is where you want to be.

**Fourth**, develop a roadmap.  Once the team is in agreement on the desired result, it is important to identify an implementation process.  Put together a detailed plan on what needs to be done,

who is going to do it and when.  You may need to phase in certain elements of the deployment as many organizations can only handle change in increments while they are still going about their daily routine.  Try to be as non-disruptive as possible.  Critical in this process will be the training and education plan for the department and all users. It is critical to follow the plan and implement the changes as they are defined, do not get distracted or try to change paths during the deployment.

**Fifth**, set aside enough time for training, especially one-on-one personal training of key users.  Adequate training will make the transition easier for all involved.  The more people understand and know how to use your new system, the easier it will be for them to adjust from "how they always did things!"

As part of this implementation, much of the administration and configuration of the system can be done before the users are brought into the process.  The more that has been set up, the faster the adoption.  As an example, the use of macros to put standard text into a report speeds the process and ensures a consistency of reporting for like results.  Using the macros may be different that in previous systems.  Pre-loading these in to the database will make the training and utilization easier and will give users a sense of familiarity.

The importance of complete and personal training can not be over emphasized as one of the fundamental keys to successful deployment.  Training will serve to help overcome much of the "fear factor" associated with new technology and counter the common comment often heard, "This new system slows me down because it is too complex."

Finally, verify that the new system is performing well and achieving the desired results.  Verification of productivity improvements can serve as a significant communication point with users.  If the users see documented evidence of productivity or patient satisfaction improvement they will continue to support the change.

To be effective in measuring productivity, it is necessary to identify those metrics that are important to the organization – and gain agreement from the team and management that these metrics are important.  For example:
  1. Report Turnaround – tracking the time from when a report is dictated to the time it is returned to the radiologist for signature.  It is also possible to track the time that the radiologist takes to sign the report.
  2. Costs – monitor the amount of money spent on transcription, including any courier costs.
  3. Customer satisfaction – complete a survey of referring physicians to determine their degree of satisfaction with your reporting process.

Once you have established your institutional metrics begin collecting and reporting data prior to deployment of the new system.  Inform members of the team and users of your results so that they understand the time, costs and satisfaction statistics.  Once the new system is installed continue to collect the data and report the comparison.  The better the results, the harder people will work to make the new system a success.

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Preparation is a very straight forward process. Good preparation will lead to a successful implementation and adoption of the new capability. To make it successful it is important to recognize that this is a change and that change is good. Managing change will be the most difficult, yet most important part of the process. Former Louisiana Governor Huey Long urged voters to "vote early and vote often!" This same rule applies in managing change. Communicate early, to all stakeholders, and communicate often. The more informed your users are, the less resistant they will be, continually emphasizing how they and their patients will be better off.

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