

Preparing for a Successful Epic Implementation

To Our Healthcare Clients and Friends:

When projecting the costs, resources and time demands of a successful Epic implementation, it is wise to assume that a project this broad, extensive, lengthy, and expensive will not be without its challenges – and each challenge comes with additional costs, demands and risks. According to *Becker's Hospital Review*, the following healthcare systems having implemented EPIC since 2014 incurred the following costs:

- A healthcare system in the Southeast incurred costs of almost \$200M (including capital expenses) with a two year implementation. One year post implementation, the system is losing about \$4M a quarter mainly because of billing errors according to *EHR Intelligence*
- A Rhode Island-based health system projected expenditures of around \$90M; actual costs were closer to \$100M. During the implementation, *Modern Healthcare* reported cash flow was slowing down and the organization's bond rating was downgraded to Baa2 – close to junk-level
- A healthcare system in the Northeast saw its initial cost projections of \$600M grow to \$1.2B during its three year implementation
- A not-for-profit healthcare system in the Midwest incurred costs of \$43M while expecting the implementation to take about a year and a half

With this much money on the line, it is important to get the implementation right – and when referring to implementation, pre-go live and post-go live should be considered. In the meantime, daily operations continue. The temptation is to 'save' money by increasing time commitment demands upon salaried staff. By 'squeezing the balloon' in this way, either the project or cash flow will suffer. Areas in need of consideration for success for this type of implementation revolve around project management, interim management, subject matter experts, and supplemental services.

References:

EHR Intelligence

(<https://ehrintelligence.com/news/top-5-most-expensive-ehr-implementations-of-2017>)

Modern Healthcare

(<http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20140606/NEWS/306069948>)

Becker's Hospital Review

(<https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/healthcare-information-technology/8-epic-ehr-implementations-with-the-biggest-price-tags-in-2015.html>)

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BACKGROUND

Considering the need to comply with regulatory demands and the business requirements of your organization, the risk/rewards have never been higher. Planning necessitates expertise and experience beyond the capacity of your staff. Also, with most revenue cycle staffs being on a tight budget, there is little room available for the team to be involved in pre-implementation planning, post-implementation problem solving and addressing open legacy accounts.

CHALLENGES

As with any project, obstacles, roadblocks, and critical decisions lurk in the most unexpected places. It is unlikely your existing team is equipped with the human capacity, skill level and experience necessary to successfully navigate this enormous undertaking. To add context, the following are some of the known issues facing each implementation:

- Technological complexity
- Internal leadership has limited availability
- Managing end-users' expectations
- Timelines may be tight or unrealistic
- Experienced staff members with needed skill sets are few or non-existent
- Tight budget demands
- Leadership and staff availability to maintain current productivity
- Decisions concerning the legacy system and current open accounts

INSIGHTS

Pre-Implementation

No two Epic 'builds' are the same. Months and months of mapping, building tables, testing and collaboration between departments will provide your organization with a unique system that will support the needs of your organization for the future. In order to accomplish this, key team members will dedicate countless hours to these tasks. In fact, some will be focused on this full time.

In order to maintain the daily operations during the 18-24 months before go-live, it is important to back-fill these positions with experienced and competent Revenue Cycle and Operational leadership and subject matter experts. This group of professionals can work to maintain and/or improve your Key Performance Indicators (KPI), modify operations to prepare for the new system, and pave the way for an easier retirement of the legacy system during post-implementation.

Managing the building of this system will be massive. Even the most competent teams and steering committees need support from those who 'have been there before.' Project management help for your team can assist with keeping and reaching each milestone on the project management document on time. For less experienced department heads, it is advised to secure for them the advisor help needed to successfully build their piece of the system.

INSIGHTS CONT'D...

Post-Implementation

There is no such thing as a perfect Epic implementation. In the days, weeks and months following 'go live,' issues will present themselves. In order to address these issues timely and without major delays in cash flow, a quick response team made of IT staff, Revenue Cycle leaders, other Department leaders, and an Epic experienced project manager is needed to provide a timely solution to each issue.

Another major challenge during post-implementation is the question around the open legacy accounts. With the advent of the new system, the staff will be occupied with becoming comfortable with Epic. It will be necessary to engage an outside team with an experienced AR manager and a team to provide supplemental services to resolve the old accounts receivable dollars. The more efficient and effective this team is, the quicker these accounts are resolved, the stronger the cash flow and the quicker the legacy system can be decommissioned and monthly support fees can be eliminated.

SUMMARY

With a system-wide, multi-year fully-involved endeavor such as an Epic implementation, the leadership and middle management teams will be called upon to give a great deal of their time attending work groups tasked with some aspect of 'the build.' This portion of the project alone will extend over months and even years. The expectation of successfully completing this project with existing staff and no additional resources is often unrealistic.

Revint Solutions is ready and fully equipped to support your efforts from the first day of pre-implementation until the last account on the legacy system is resolved during post-implementation. Our team is able to back-fill leadership positions in PA and PFS during 'the build.' We can provide experienced project managers who are subject matter experts and will keep the project on time and under budget. Our supplemental support services which includes call center services, AR billing and follow up, denial management and coding services can assist with the legacy accounts receivable resolution. We will assure that legacy accounts receivable dollars do not get overlooked or ignored.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to present this information to you. If you have any questions or need assistance with evaluating your hospital's exposure to the information presented above, please do not hesitate to contact me at (484) 844-4025.

Truly Yours,
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Meet the Author | Terri Donohue

Terri is the Senior Vice President of Revenue Management at Revint Solutions. Terri is a highly motivated healthcare executive with a history of accomplishments that spans over 26 years. She is a goal oriented professional who creates solutions through people.



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