

Closing the technology chasm between doctors and IT staff

Overview

Expensive clinical IT implementations can go awry if there are miscommunications or missteps between doctors and IT professionals. IT staff can become frustrated when doctors fail to use the provided technology and complain about not being involved in the technology selection process. How do you effectively bridge this communication gap and ensure that your expensive investments in healthcare technology succeed? This paper outlines some best practices for helping doctors and IT professionals connect and work toward the same goals. It also explains how a provider, such as CenturyLink™, can facilitate a smooth deployment of emerging technologies and collaboration solutions that benefit healthcare providers and the IT departments that serve them.

Quality patient care requires communication

In healthcare environments, the problems that need solving are business and communication problems. If technology is used to solve a problem, most likely it resolve it; instead, it may even make matters worse. To understand the problem you're trying to solve, good communication is critical. Doctors don't always communicate the same way as IT professionals. When misunderstandings occur, they can make it difficult to implement IT projects effectively, despite wanting to provide doctors with technology needed to improve patient care. Once IT loses credibility with doctors, it's hard to get it back. Projects usually go wrong for predictable reasons—either not everyone agreed to the solution at the outset or staff had different goals and expectations. Sometimes there aren't enough people to support the technologies being deployed or infrastructure isn't robust enough to support the new deployment. Improving communications between the healthcare and IT staff helps successfully deploy solutions that help provide quality patient care.

Working with doctors

There are some basic differences between the way doctors and IT professionals operate and those differences often inhibit the successful deployment of IT projects. Many doctors make fast decisions based on the information at hand or on instinct and they must multi-task. They don't work 8–5 because patient needs come first. On the other hand, IT staff works 8-5 and are focused on individual tasks. Decision making is hierarchical and based on planning and requirements.

For IT staff, specifications are clear and meetings are regularly scheduled and are frequent. By contrast, doctors don't get paid to attend meetings and are therefore often reluctant to attend. They have unpredictable schedules that may change in an instant, depending on patient needs.

Contact your CenturyLink Representative today!



When implementing new IT projects or new technologies in a clinical setting, keep these tips in mind:

- Use clinical data – to support the need for the new technology and make sure the data applies to doctors
- Engage doctors with quick updates – be respectful of their busy schedules
- Don't get bogged down in technical details with doctors – they want to understand the benefit of the change, not the details of how the change is implemented
- Look for advocates among the medical staff – find a physician who is a staff leader, calm under pressure and who can help liaison between the medical and IT staffs
- Build rapport – treat the medical staff as colleagues and help them understand your goals and objectives
- Stick to an agreed upon number of hours a month – to meet with doctors for their participation
- Communicate with a multi-faceted approach – since people consume information in different ways
- Practice effective communication – to help manage expectations, work through inevitable IT issues, win clinical advocates and succeed

Clinical IT from the carrier's perspective

Certainly the infrastructure plays a critical role in clinical IT success stories. It's important to know how to avoid common pitfalls during deployment of new technologies in a healthcare setting. Open communication between doctors and IT staff is important for a clinical IT project to be successful. Underlying supporting infrastructure is critical for delivering on promised benefits. Hiring a telecommunications provider can help implement a successful project. But, how do you ensure that your telecommunications provider will ensure success?

Ask these questions when deciding on a telecommunications solutions partner:

- Did the company learn the overall goals of the organization, the daily routine of users and goals of the project owners?
- Did the company's sales professionals and system engineers show a need to become extended team members of the IT organization to identify the right solutions to deliver the desired results?
- Did the company identify a total solution that fits the requirements of a clinical setting?
- Is the company able to provide on-going day-to-day support?
- Did the company demonstrate its understanding of the strict regulatory requirements specific to the medical industry to ensure security?

CenturyLink solutions

CenturyLink developed solutions to increase the timeliness of information access in healthcare settings, while keeping data secure. Video solutions and unified communications (UC) technologies bring people together over distances for fast, informed decision making. They also provide clinicians in remote areas the information they need quickly and cost-effectively. Ethernet and multi-protocol label switching solutions enable secure connectivity between locations for fast and secure image and record delivery. Understanding the specific objectives of the project ahead of time enables IT staff and CenturyLink to deliver a solution that is tailored to the application, without miring doctors in technology details that they may not have time for.

Technologies such as intelligent call routing, automated meeting reminders and converting faxes to emails that can be delivered to mobile devices help make doctors and other clinical staff. We also use Cloud computing to provide scalability and performance for file sharing while controlling costs.

Contact your CenturyLink Representative today!



CenturyLink solutions to help enhance communication in a clinical setting:

- On-demand IVR to assist callers when phoning your office
- Managed IP Communications is composed of IP telephony, voice mail/unified messaging, wireless LAN, IP contact center and paging to facilitate communication
- Integrated Access simplifies your voice and data networks onto a single circuit that dynamically allocates bandwidth between voice calls, Internet or VPN traffic so no communication is missed
- Conferencing integrates audio and web conferencing so staff can meet and discuss patient care with simple point-and-click commands
- Managed Applications includes web mail, Hosted Exchange®, Microsoft SharePoint®, ecommerce capabilities and storage space to share documents
- Ethernet provides a flexible, reliable way to interconnect locations across a metropolitan area, you can extend Ethernet beyond your campus to enhance your network performance, so communication moves quickly

Why CenturyLink

CenturyLink delivers reliable, scalable data and voice networking solutions, across one of the U.S. largest fiber networks. We provide industry-leading service level agreements and world-class customer service to businesses of all sizes, ranging from small businesses to 95% of Fortune 500 companies.

Contact your CenturyLink Representative today!

