

Maximizing the potential of your EHR

How an EHR optimization, upgrade or switch can help you start getting more from your system.



WIPFLI

Overview

As the backbone of a strong technology foundation, a high-functioning EHR, can help healthcare providers increase revenue and improve patient care. But realizing those benefits depends on how your organization is making use of your system.

Too often, healthcare organizations settle for less with their EHR: Data remains siloed, patient experience and care delivery stagnate, and providers spend more time on documentation than they do visits.

Start doing more with your EHR by evaluating your usage. Maybe your organization is using a system that doesn't have the functionality you need to address your digital strategy or the way you do business. Or maybe you have the capabilities you need — you just lack the knowledge to take advantage of them.

Optimizing, upgrading or switching your EHR can help you address these gaps so that you start seeing both the financial and patient outcomes you want.



“A large majority (80%) of physicians – either in ambulatory or acute care settings – who use templates report being able to complete more than 50% of their charting immediately after seeing a patient. Order lists and filters are also associated with higher rates of immediate chart closure.”

– The KLAS research report, Personalizing the EHR 2023

Understanding your potential benefits

Before you decide whether an optimization, upgrade or new system is right for your organization, you need to first understand the capabilities you should be getting.

At its full potential, your EHR should be helping your organization increase revenue, efficiency and productivity, as well as transforming your ability to support your patients.

Some of the key features you should be looking for include ways to:

Facilitate interoperability

EHRs that support interoperability let you see patient records from multiple contexts, including outside facilities, giving you a comprehensive picture of a patient’s history and care no matter where they get treated.

And by providing a more complete view of a patient’s medical record, this feature can help physicians make better decisions about care.

Increase productivity

Your EHR should be helping your staff streamline key processes throughout the patient journey, from registration to discharge.

By automating tasks or providing templates for different aspects of documentation, an EHR can help physicians spend less time documenting a visit and more time on patient care. Features like order lists or favorites can also help staff have more efficient ways to access the tasks, orders and notes they need most often.

Improve financial viability

Increasing costs and complex reimbursement processes can make it challenging for healthcare organizations to maintain their financial health.

Your EHR should be giving you the visibility to see opportunities for increasing revenue. For example, maybe your emergency department providers aren't consistently billing high enough for the level of service. With this visibility, you can improve documentation and ensure you're getting paid accurately for your services.

Many EHRs can also automate or otherwise allow providers to easily drop charges at the point of documentation, helping to ensure that you are capturing all the revenue for a visit.

Increase access to care

Your EHR should be helping your patients receive timely and appropriate health services that meet their needs and preferences.

For example, optimizing or upgrading can help you improve patients' digital experience

on your online portal, making it easier for patients to access their health records online, and empowering them to take more control of their health.

“Integration with EHR ranks as the second most important factor for physicians when adopting new digital health tools.”

— American Medical Association
Digital Health Research for 2022

It can also help you offer services such as telehealth by supporting virtual care and remote monitoring. In addition to helping you connect to patients you might not otherwise see, your EHR can capture all the information you need for documentation in the same way that you would for an in-person patient.

Enable integration

Integration is becoming increasingly important for providers as they take on additional systems like ERP and CRM — not to mention integrating patient monitors, point-of-care devices and other equipment. But older systems often don't have that capability, causing slowdowns and increased errors as staff have to switch between systems and even duplicate or manually scan or enter data.

Create paperless processes

Whether they're optimizing or switching to a new system, the goal of many organizations is to cut back on the amount of paper in their processes. Too often, healthcare organizations are working with separate systems, forcing them to fax referrals, orders or other patient information.

Optimizing or upgrading your EHR can give you access to key capabilities — including interoperability, e-prescribing, and electronic faxing or messaging — to help your organization transfer information more efficiently.

Realizing your EHR's potential

If you're not getting all the capability you want from your EHR, it's time to reevaluate your usage.

Optimization costs less and can still give your organization a significant ROI by helping you use your EHR to improve billing and care while reducing costs. However, upgrading to a newer version of your current system or transitioning to a new one may be better if you're not getting the capabilities or support you need.

To help you determine which option is right for your organization, consider these three key questions:

Does your staff have the training they need?

Sometimes limited capability may not be rooted in the system you're using, but in a lack of staff training.

It's typical to undergo a major training period when an EHR is first implemented, but it's easy for things to get missed. Depending on how long it's been since implementation, those initial people who were trained may have left your organization, or knowledge about certain capabilities may have been lost. You may also need to evaluate your policies, procedures and staff responsibilities.

Optimization provides a training refresh for staff, helping them dig deeper into the features and functionalities the system has, as well helping you understand how you can best align your processes and staffing to that system.

It gives staff the opportunity to get more detailed instruction on your system so that they can make it as easy as possible to input or access information. And it also helps boost satisfaction with both your EHR, and in the workplace.

“Clinicians who strongly disagree their training was specific to their workflow are more than twice as likely to report planning to leave their organization compared to those who strongly agree training matched their workflows.”

— The KLAS research report, *Clinician Turnover and the EHR Experience*





Do you have the capability you need?

Evaluating the level of training your staff has can help you determine if the challenges you're facing are due to your staff not knowing how to use the system or if the system you're using simply lacks capability.

You also need to consider your organization's overall digital strategy.

Healthcare technology changes fast. Innovations like AI are creating new ways to revolutionize care, and the addition of systems like ERP and CRM are increasing the need for integration. To keep pace, you need to ensure

that your EHR has the capability you need to support the future of your digital journey.

If you're uncertain about your EHR's capability, consider optimizing first. Optimizing can act as a valuable first step before you decide to upgrade or switch by helping you understand your current system's limitations.

Do you have a good relationship with your vendor?

Evaluating your relationship with your vendor can help you decide if your organization would be better served by switching to a new system.

When looking at your vendor satisfaction, consider if your organization:

- Has control over the features of your system that you want to change.
- Receives timely, effective responses to service requests.
- Gets the level of support you're paying for.

If your vendor isn't providing the service your organization needs, switching to a new system may be the better option.

Maintaining your EHR's capabilities

Once you've gained the capabilities you want by optimizing, upgrading or switching, it's important to consider how you're going to maintain them.

Here are two key things your organization can do after an optimization or implementation to continue improving your usage:

Create documentation

In the same way you give patients discharge instructions for what to do after they leave your facility, your organization should be documenting the best practices and processes you set in place after an optimization or implementation period.

This documentation can include things like quick tip sheets, cheat sheets for commonly used features, or policy and procedure handbooks for important capabilities like setting up favorites.

Having written information in place will provide your current staff with an easy way to review knowledge about your systems. And for new staff, these documents can help make onboarding easier and more effective.

Commit to an ongoing process

Optimization and adoption don't end once your engagement is over — they're ongoing processes.

Once your system is in place, your organization needs to be regularly:

- Keeping up to date on the latest functionality.
- Providing personalized training for staff.
- Evaluating how your organization is using your system.

It's also important to recognize that an initial optimization may provide new insights for your organization to pursue. You may uncover new areas that need more focus or that warrant a deeper dive.

Making a commitment to ensuring that your EHR is being used effectively can help you maintain the level of capability your organization needs.

A photograph of a male doctor in a light blue shirt with a stethoscope around his neck, looking down at a tablet held by a patient. A woman is partially visible in the background, also looking at the tablet. The scene is brightly lit, likely in a hospital or clinic. A blue rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

*“Optimization and adoption don’t end once your engagement is over — they’re **ongoing processes.**”*

Wipfli is ready to help guide your organization in realizing the full benefits of your EHR.

If you're upgrading or switching systems, our selection and implementation team can help you ensure that you get a system with the capabilities you need while minimizing the disruption to your organization. And if you're optimizing, we can help you identify gaps, train your people and create effective documentation for your policies and procedures.

Our dedicated team can also provide you with support in key areas including:

- Governance
- Communication planning
- Managing your vendor relationship
- Training and change management
- Best practices

Visit our site to learn more about how our services help you maximize your EHR.

wipfli.com/healthcare

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