Making the EHR Switch

If you are contemplating the move to a new electronic health record (EHR) solution, you are not alone.

A 2013 survey by Black Book Rankings* shows that nearly one in six medical practices are seriously considering a switch before the end of the 2013.

Let’s explore the reasons for moving, what to look for in a new solution and how to make the transition easier.

*2013 “Year of the Great EHR Switch” Survey by Black Book Rankings
Why Consider a Change?

You may be contemplating a change for a number of reasons. Perhaps the product you have didn’t meet your expectations, perhaps it doesn’t allow for interfacing with other systems or is missing functionality, or maybe it just wasn’t embraced by your office staff.

A 2013 report by Software Advice* shows that 31.2% of medical providers are replacing an existing EHR.

Software Advice found that the top reasons for replacing EHRs are:
• Dissatisfaction with current EHR
• Desire for a fully integrated system
• Having an old/unsupported system
• Cost implications
• Compliance/meaningful Use

Beyond this list, there are a number of other reasons for replacing your EHR.
• Your EHR vendor may be going out of business or being acquired.
• The product cannot be used to meet the CMS EHR Incentive program Meaningful Use requirements.
• The EHR will not integrate with your Practice Management software, local Health Information Exchange, laboratory or radiology center.

*Software Advice “Four Years Later: The Impact of the HITECH Act on EHR Implementations” June 13, 2013
Providers were asked to select the top three compelling reasons for their practice to consider a vendor switch from their current EHR *

80% Solution does not meet the individual needs of this practice, including workflow

79% This Practice did not adequately assess our needs before selecting the original EHR

77% Design of solution is not suited for this Practice Specialty/Specialties

44% Vendor not responsive to requests and needs

20% Current EHR does not adequately communicate with other EHRs

16% Concerns that current EHR will not meet Accountable Care requirements

12% Current vendor is too focused on Meaningful Use achievement

11% Other practice software modules are not integrating with EHR

5% Setbacks have caused delays in reimbursement or disrupt work

14% Other

To review the Black Book report, please visit Care360.QuestDiagnostics.com/Black-Book.cfm

* From the Black Book Rankings report published July 2013 “Year of the Great EHR Switch”
Ensure Vendor Stability

From 2011-2013, there were more than 500 Ambulatory EHRs used by physicians to meet the meaningful use requirements of the CMS EHR Incentive program. Yet, 80 percent of the first year attestations came from only 43 products.* Hundreds of products were used by only a handful of providers. There is little doubt that the number of EHR vendors will decline significantly in the years to come.

Find a vendor you trust and who will be around for years to come

There are some indicators that will help you identify a strong vendor.

- Talk to clients to confirm the vendor provides consistent product updates and communications.
- Verify their plans to certify their products under the Office of the National Coordinator’s 2014 Certification program. The new certification will be required for all products being used to obtain the CMS EHR Incentive in 2014.
- Look for outside verification of a company’s strength. Listing on the Fortune 500, recent investments in the company, or even the organization’s financial reports if the vendor is a publically traded company.
- Trust your instincts. If something doesn’t seem right, don’t move forward.

Usability is Key

There are many factors that will contribute to the usability of a product. Does it have the features you need? Is the product intuitive to use? Will long term use of the EHR impact your productivity significantly?

**If the product does not have an intuitive user interface and fit within your office workflow, it will never be embraced by you and your staff.**

Invite all the key players in your office to be part of the product demonstrations and selection of the product. Include front desk staff, nurses, physicians, anyone who will be using the product. Each person will look at the product with their job in mind and may spot concerns that others miss.

Make sure you and your staff are comfortable with the new solution.

- View product demos and videos. Do the screens make sense? Can you easily follow along?
- Visit client offices to observe how the product fits into their workflow and ask a lot of questions. Are you happy with the product? What was the learning curve like? Are you happy with the customer support and training?
- Ask your sales representative if they will let you drive the product for a few minutes during demonstrations. Are things where you would expect them to be? Is it easy to read everything?
- Understand if the product going to force workflow changes that will negatively impact your office.
- Accessibility by multiple types of devices such as desktop, laptop and tablet computers, along with mobile phones and the iPad® offer flexibility for people to work the way they are most comfortable.
Consider All the Financial Implications

Look beyond the cost to purchase a new solution. Consider the cost to abandon your old solution, office downtime during implementation, additional hardware or software costs and the impact it may have on your participation in the CMS EHR Incentive Program.

Cost to abandon your old solution
• Depending on the contract you signed with your current vendor, you may have an early termination fee.
• There may be costs to have your patient data exported or allow you to continue to access the old charts.

Office downtime during implementation
• Similar to the first time you implemented an EHR, your office will have some downtime while the staff is training on the new solution. Depending on the new EHR, it may just be a reduced patient schedule for a few days or closing the office for up to a week.

Additional hardware or software costs
• While not always the case, a new EHR may require new hardware or software. This is less likely if you choose a web-based product a.k.a. Software as a Service (SaaS).
• A number of EHR solutions offer optional mobile or iPad solutions that your practice may want to take advantage of.

Consider a Cloud Based solution
• Cloud based solutions (web-based products or SaaS) offer a number of advantages including rapid deployment, minimal hardware costs and easy access via any internet connected device.

Impact it may have to your participation in the CMS EHR Incentive Program
• If you are participating in the CMS EHR Incentive program, special consideration must be taken when changing solutions. The first year of participation only requires 90 days of Meaningful Use, and subsequent years require a full year of usage. In order to generate the data required for attestation, you will need to run reports from both systems and merge the data yourself.
• Be sure the EHR you are looking at has plans to certify under the Office of the National Coordinator 2014 Certification program. If it does not obtain the 2014 certification, you cannot use the EHR to qualify for the incentives and avoid penalties starting in 2014.
Other Issues

Verify Included Functionality
When talking to potential new vendors, be sure they explain all the features and functionality included and what is going to incur additional charges or time to install. For example, an interface to your laboratory may be available from day one, or you may have to wait for an interface to be built.

Ability to Integrate is Critical
Today you may be concerned with integrating your EHR with your existing patient scheduling and medical billing software. Think bigger. The CMS EHR Incentive program requires interoperability with your lab vendor, imaging companies, other EHR systems and public registries. Will the EHR be able to meet those requirements?

New Care Models
ACOs, Patient Centered Medical Homes, Health Information Exchanges and evolving Care Coordination models will require technology that enables connectivity between multiple systems whether in a physician office or hospital. Look for a vendor that has the ability to make those connections and enable care coordination in your community.

Transitioning Between Systems
Making the move from one EHR solution to another will disrupt your office workflow and patient management for a period of time.
• Look for an EHR vendor that has experience with customers who have switched EHRs and will work with you to build a plan for winding down the old system as you start using the new system.
• Understand how you will be accessing your old data. Will it be available in the new system (requires the old vendor to export the data and the new vendor to import it) or will you need to access two systems for a period of time?
Once you have made the decision to move forward and replace your EHR, here are a few tips to help your transition.

• Get agreement from the key players in your office about which solution you select.

• Understand the contract before you sign. Know what is included and what will cost extra.

• Have all required hardware and software in place before your implementation. If you have questions about the requirements, ask the vendor.

• Identify one or more EHR super users in your office. These will be the people who learn as much as they possibly can about the EHR and help the rest of your office embrace the solution.

• Have everyone trained. Do not let anyone in the office skip their training. Your vendor should let you know which staff roles needs to be part of each training session.

• Be upfront with your patients. Let them know when they come in that you are implementing a new system and it may take a few extra minutes. Some offices put flyers up in the exam rooms, others just verbally tell people.

• Ask your vendor for an implementation timeline. Be sure everyone in your office is familiar with the timeline and meets the milestones to keep you on schedule.
Learn More

Contact us to get an extract of the Black Book Report or learn more about Care360 EHR.

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