

InsidePerspective

ACHIEVE THE POWER OF MEDITECH



Migrating to 6.0: A Customer Exchange

Sara Schaeffner, Managing Director, MEDITECH Consulting Group within Dell Services

One of the hottest topics within MEDITECH organizations today is whether it makes sense for that hospital to migrate from the current MEDITECH platform to 6.0, and if so, when is the right time to make the move. It's a major decision and many factors come in to play.

Is your organization ready for a major project? Are you in a position to upgrade your infrastructure? What data will be converted? How will you ensure buy-in throughout the hospital?

While our technology and application consultants can certainly help sort things out, often times it's beneficial to hear directly from your peers. At our annual Healthcare Optimization Workshop (HOW) held in May, I had the pleasure to moderate an interactive session which included a panel of IT executives who had recently migrated to 6.0 or were in the process of migrating. Linda Minghella (CIO of Boulder Community Hospital), Audrey Parks (IT Director at Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital), and Richard Cruthirds (CIO at Peterson Regional Medical Center) were all kind enough to share their experiences and answer questions from many of you in the audience of that session. We appreciated the participation of all – panelists and audience alike – in making this customer exchange a success.

To Each His Own

One thing that was clearly reinforced during the discussion was that every hospital situation is unique; there is no clear-cut answer that says all hospitals should go to 6.0 and when. Nor is there one cookie cutter implementation approach that will work for all hospitals that choose to migrate. However, there was common ground in our panelists' experiences and they offered some helpful tips for hospital executives who are considering making the move.

There was some great discussion about the importance of clearly identifying the business drivers of your organization when establishing your go-forward strategy. Some of the drivers identified during the discussion included:

- Meeting the ARRA requirements
- Implementing Computerized Physician Order Entry (CPOE)
- Patient Safety
- Streamlining the organization's HCIS (the integration MEDITECH offers supports this and can eliminate some 3rd party systems)
- Establishing an advanced HCIS to attract/recruit physicians
- Improving physician satisfaction

Understanding the Data Conversion Process

While mapping out a detailed migration strategy and implementation plan is critical, the panelists noted that understanding the data conversion process was another important factor that should be addressed up front. Questions like "what data gets converted?", "how does it get converted?", "what data needs to be archived?", and "what data needs to be scanned?" all need to be carefully considered.

One panelist also advised that there needs to be an understanding of not only the data that gets converted but also the information that doesn't get converted as this could become an unforeseen pain point. That is great advice. Each organization should work with MEDITECH to identify and document what data needs to be archived and scanned. It's an important step and one that needs to be well understood and carefully planned.

Gaining Physician Adoption for 6.0

As with any major changes within a healthcare organization, a strategy to gain clinician and physician support and adoption is critical to success. This was another common area of agreement amongst the panelists and audience when considering the migration to 6.0.

Customers who had already migrated to 6.0 commented on the level of physician satisfaction regarding the improved 6.0 graphical user interface and system navigation. Some of the hospitals saw this feature as a major tangible benefit and very helpful towards gaining acceptance by the physician community. In several cases, physicians became an integral part of the migration governance committee and played a major part in gaining the support and adoption by other physicians. We certainly encourage this type of physician involvement.

Branding the 6.0 Migration Effort

To help gain hospital-wide support for the migration, a couple folks noted that they had branded their migration and implementation efforts with a project name. This is an excellent idea that serves to defer any previous biases and generate excitement for the new system and capabilities. The branding effort also reminds employees that the migration touches all areas of the organization and is not simply an IT project. Ownership is spread through every department and every employee.

Staffing

Staffing and resources are always a concern when undertaking such a large project, and resource planning was widely discussed in terms of the impact of 6.0. While some thought they might need additional staff, others felt they had the right staffing level but might need different skill sets within their organization. Some of the panelists shared different ways they have leveraged Dell Services to augment their team.

Training

Concurrent with the technology and application transformations required for the successful launch of 6.0, training on the new MEDITECH platform requires a well thought out plan and adequate resources. While each organization has unique challenges, there was general agreement that it was most productive to train a lead from each department who would then share the responsibility for training their own staff members. This shared responsibility model ensures engagement with all employees in the organization and makes the most efficient use of resources.

There were many more anecdotes and useful tips that were discussed during the peer-to-peer session and we'll continue to share real world migration and implementation stories with you in the coming months. Keep an eye out for more newsletter articles and hospital case studies on migrating to 6.0.