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Maximizing your EHR investment: Tips from the experts

Your EHR is likely your most costly technology investment, and it's worth it because it centralizes care delivery. But when it also impedes care delivery – because clinical workflows are clunky and frustrating – you're not maximizing its potential benefits. Or your ROI.

And no matter where you are in your EHR optimization journey, a little insight and advice never hurts. Here are the 10 top tips from two expert practitioners on how to maximize your EHR investment.

Bo Miller,
Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant,
St. Charles Medical Center

Michael Mulcahy,
IT Virtualization Engineer,
University Hospitals Cleveland

For when you need to balance fast, streamlined workflows with security and compliance...

01 **"Try to limit the possibility of the user having to manage multiple passwords. The less clicks, the better."**

– Michael Mulcahy

University Hospitals Cleveland relies on Imprivata to help streamline access and authentication events. With just the tap of a badge, clinicians are able to access everything they need without remembering and manually entering every username and password.

02

"The whole point is to reduce the number of clicks, which helps streamline the workflow. Because people are fantastic at finding workarounds, if you make workflows as easy and as fast as possible, they'll do that."

– Bo Miller

St. Charles Medical Center uses single sign-on, supported by Imprivata, to make EHR access simple and easy. Miller and his team – who jokingly refer to themselves as "clickery specialists" – understand that something as simple as removing clicks can work wonders for workflows.

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"We use Epic for lots of transactions that require authentications, like with Narrator or witnessing workflows. So now, for example, when you're walking into a trauma, you just tap your badge, saying you're arriving when you're doing a sign off. I just have the next nurse come next to me. They don't need to sign into the computer. They just have to tap their badge witnessing me. It makes it super fast."

– Michael Mulcahy

For organizations who use Epic and make use of its specific clinical workflows, Imprivata makes authentications simple and easy. Instead of manual (and often incorrect) processes to attest to medication administration, for example, a quick badge tap will do the job.

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"As the technology goes, we need to keep it in tune with the delivery of care, first and foremost, because the primary thing here is to keep cognitive load focused on the patient. Clinicians shouldn't be focused on 'how do I get through the technology today?' That will destroy them; it will make them unhappy, and it leads to burnout."

– Bo Miller

Technology can – and should – be the great enabler, but it isn't always. That's because technology may impede, rather than enable, workflows. For clinicians, that's especially problematic, because in a healthcare setting fast access may truly make a difference. If technology is making patient care more difficult, you need different technology.

For when you need to make your mobile strategy a reality...

05 "Make sure you're designing a workflow around mobile that's conducive to a small screen, with quick access. You're generally walking, not standing with it – if I'm standing around, I'd rather look at a full desktop and get all the information I need. So, form and function have to match."

– Bo Miller

Mobile devices can have huge productivity implications for clinicians, especially for those whose roles require movement around the hospital. But when you make them easy to access, you should also make sure that they're easy to use.

06 "It's all about delivering care. Technologies put in place need to augment that. And if my mobile device is in front of my face the whole time – especially in front of people who aren't as tech savvy – it's going to look like I could be doing something unrelated to care delivery. So, we still have a lot of work to do around how the use of a mobile device is perceived."

– Bo Miller

While mobile devices are amazing tools for on-the-go care, it's crucial to make sure that their use is understood by patients. Bo suggests that something as simple as using hospital-branded phone cases works as a clear indicator that a mobile device is being used for care delivery activities.

07 "For the ambulatory side we have Epic Haiku and Canto, and you get direct messaging from the providers or the nurses, or even the patients. We use personal devices for those, and we've seen a very good utilization of it. We can 'secure chat' doctors and people that are having issues, and they 'secure chat' back, which is a great form of communication."

– Michael Mulcahy

Having easy access to a (slightly modified) view of the EHR enables use of lots of other productivity tools. For example, clinicians can rest assured that they're staying up to date on any secure messages that come though, all without logging on to a computer.

For when you need to ensure clinicians have the access they need, when they need it...

08 **"When doing role-based identity management, keep it broad and keep it simple, and give them the tools they need."**

– Bo Miller

The team at St. Charles relied on Imprivata to help spin up mass vaccination centers during Covid, including provisioning hundreds of volunteers, National Guard troops, and employees with different access rights – all in four days! But role-based access can be powerful even for the everyday things, too – just make sure not to make things so specific as to create new restrictions.

09 **"The hard part, when it comes to day one access and identity governance, is layering. Because something is going to change in the future, layering can help get clinicians the right access at the right time when they need it."**

– Michael Mulcahy

When you put together your comprehensive identity governance plan, make sure to set yourself – and your clinicians – up for success. Roles and access rights should be locked down so that least privileged access principles are respected, but make sure it's not so specific as to cause problems.

For when you think you don't need (as much) training...

10 **"The main thing is that you don't want to skimp on training; don't skimp on it, and enforce it. There's a direct impact to loss of revenue because people won't know how to code, won't get their notes in, won't be using the right workflows. It's a very big deal, so just don't skimp on the training."**

– Bo Miller

Thinking you're done with training? Think again. Offering training and education is key to ensuring the success of any technology implementation.

EHR optimization is a journey, not an end destination, and these 10 tips are only scratching the surface. To learn more about how you can optimize your EHR, visit: **https://www.imprivata.com/EHRvalue**

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