

WHITEPAPER

Improving clinical efficiency: It's about time



Time is the scarcest resource of all, and in the busy, challenging world of a modern hospital or clinic, the need for time has never been greater. Speed is critical when lives are on the line (as is accuracy, of course), but barriers often creep up and make achieving speed fairly difficult. Technology has often been seen as a panacea for efficiency, and in many places does deliver on that promise. However, when placed into the unique healthcare environment, it has created situations where time is unnecessarily lost.

Measuring change

Technology has revolutionized the modern world and is now part of the fabric of society – what began as a steady creep of technological advancements has now become a landslide, accelerating rapidly as a result of necessity. Within healthcare, that change should be viewed in terms of what benefits it brings either directly to the care of the patient or indirectly to the people who are caring for the patient. With that in mind, the need to measure the effectiveness of change is paramount.

What has become increasingly apparent is that how we measure change has not moved forward at the same rate as the change we have implemented. Is it now time to move to a new paradigm and prioritize the measurement of change when considering the value of technology? How do we measure such change? If our goal with technology is to drive efficiency, make tasks easier, and reduce wasted cycles, then let us use a common currency. Time.

Why is time so critical in healthcare?

Time is valuable in healthcare because it influences value, how people are able to provide care, and the kind of care that a patient receives. A clinician will wonder to themselves whether a particular task, process, system, or requirement contributes to their ability to address the needs of the patient; whether it helps them get better. Will more informed, more timely decisions and actions save or improve a patient's outcome? If the answer is no, then it is less likely that said task, process, system, or requirement will be used or followed.

"Most technicians say, 'What 45 seconds? That's fast.' When you put that in the real world, when you think about the impact on the patient, waiting 30 seconds for that desktop to reconnect could feel like a lifetime. The ability to get back to your desktop in seconds rather than minutes really improves patient care."

– John McFarland, Director of IT Business Management at Moffitt Cancer Center

Consider the most time-sensitive environment in a hospital, the emergency department: can a doctor or nurse afford to waste any time unnecessarily when a patient in a critical condition arrives? Also consider how vital it is to have a complete picture of the patient; any pre-existing conditions they may have and how a deeper, fuller knowledge of the patient may help guide – and possibly even improve – the decision-making process. There is almost a contradiction in those two statements, the need to take time to understand a level of detail, but not to waste time in finding it.

Therefore, every second, minute, hour wasted on tasks that do not contribute to patient care should be analyzed and addressed, but within the context of ensuring that clinicians have the fullest picture possible, the greatest number of tools and information to deliver the best possible outcomes for the patient.

As healthcare organizations consider change, it should be framed around the critical nature of healthcare and the benefit it brings to the delivery of care. But to quantify that benefit, you need to measure time.

The more time you can give back to clinicians, the fewer wasted cycles on unnecessary tasks and the more time that can be devoted to patient care and positive outcomes.

Life on the front line

Understanding what life is like at the front line is key to ensuring that digital change brings value. Not only in clinical areas of the hospital, but in the back-office areas with the IT team as well. Making decisions about where to invest time, money, and resources should be made with an understanding not of the perceived challenge or problem, but of the observed behaviors, actions, and frustrations that are impacting patient care.

When was the last time you walked a mile in your clinician user's shoes; observed their interaction with digital technology as they went about their clinical tasks? While users may vocalize their perceived problem, the root cause creating this may not be understood. Only by observing the action clinicians take can you reach that root cause.

"It's hard to overstate the importance of Imprivata OneSign in a clinical environment. If you took away that piece, it would really interfere with our organizational vision for efficiency and optimization."

– Joe Farr, RN and Clinical Applications Coordinator at King's Daughters Medical Center (KDMC)

Only by understanding clinical workflows, with full context, is it possible to make informed decisions about where to invest, and what to improve.

IT, the hero in a multi-disciplinary team

How do you effectively quantify the behaviors of clinicians and their interactions with technology? This shouldn't be a surprise: time, and specifically time spent out of patient-centered focus. The introduction of technology has placed more data, information, and insight at our fingertips. But it has also created pathways to get at that digital data that are potentially less intuitive and increasingly restricted by more barriers than ever, driven by regulation, legislation, and security needs.

Clinicians are therefore faced with a challenge: the benefits that technology brings to care, but at the expense of time spent on activity where they are out of focus. Therefore, measuring time spent is key to unlocking the success of digital technology, driving its adoption with clinicians, and, most crucially, of ensuring the highest quality of patient care.

Being able to give time back to a clinician will make you a hero: you'll be putting time back in their hands to invest in core activities rather than superfluous tasks, recovering lost time. In practice, it's about more than just installing new desktops, upgrading Windows, rolling out a new application, and resetting passwords, although all of that is important. It's about matching technology with clinical workflows. It's about making the technology so intuitive to the end user that it is almost invisible.

It's about making the new experience so benefit-packed that clinicians can't imagine doing it any other way.

“By ensuring fast, secure single sign-on with Imprivata OneSign, we’ve empowered our end-users to do their jobs...Not only do clinicians get access to the applications that they need, but they can use their badges to quickly and easily access the workstations across our facility.”

– Shawn McCrum, Manager of Identity and Access Management at Northern Light Health

Time saved, benefits realized

MORE FOCUS ON PATIENTS

An obvious benefit of time back is the ability to spend that time on patient care and not with technology. When something “just works” and doesn’t introduce distractions, it is more likely to be used. And from the patient perspective, an interaction unencumbered by technology is far preferable to one that is.

We were able to put critical security protocols in place without taking away from clinical efficiency. Now that we’ve implemented this solution throughout our sites, we couldn’t pry it out of the nurses’ hands even if we tried.”

– Massie, Senior Applications Programmer at Summa Health

RISK MITIGATION

The impact of cognitive disruption – from frequent distractions and interruptions or repetitive complex workflows – demands that new approaches and strategies be devised. Distraction from the care of the patient should absolutely be considered a risk and, therefore, reducing or removing tasks that divert focus should be a priority as part of mitigation strategies. The goal is to ensure there is less distraction for the clinician allowing focus on quality patient care.

REDUCED BURNOUT

With the increasing pressure being placed on healthcare organizations, the wellbeing of healthcare staff should also be included when considering the impact of time-consuming tasks. Staff burnout is a growing problem and is almost always related to time, or more specifically, the lack of time. By freeing up time – and generally simplifying tasks that would otherwise be frustrating – clinical staff are less likely to experience burnout.

It may seem like these are very negative ways of looking at the benefits of giving back time, but the real driver here is to empower clinicians to do what they do best – deliver high quality patient care in the best possible way.

Time for Imprivata

Many challenges faced by clinicians in a modern healthcare environment relate to digital identity, because the barriers that require time and focus to overcome are more often than not related to access security. Security in this context is identity, ensuring that the clinicians are who they say they are, have permissions to access systems or records, and are able to do so from designated or permitted locations both in and out of the hospital.

If you create bottlenecks around access to systems – around identity – you create a barrier and, therefore, wasted time. These are the problems that Imprivata solves, recognizing the importance of time, and addressing the challenges with identity and the need to balance security with ease of use.

TAKING A CLINICAL LEAD

Our approach is driven by a clinical team that is at the heart of Imprivata, ensuring that patient care is placed at the center of all projects. This is certainly not the de facto approach across the industry where solutions, often perceived as necessary as part of a digital transformation strategy, are forced upon clinicians and into existing workflows with little consideration for their impact, positive or negative.

Clinicians are notoriously resistant to change where there are no perceived benefits, and rightly so. This inevitably leads to poor adoption of solutions and projects that never get off the ground or deliver the promised benefits. Only by working closely with both IT and clinicians can a project truly be made successful.

The Imprivata approach is different because it's about time. Understanding the current experience, and what challenges and barriers clinicians are facing is key to this. Imprivata clinicians spend time with organizations to understand the landscape prior to deployment, measuring time spent on different activities by clinicians. Building this detailed picture prior to undertaking a project helps illustrate where the greatest frustrations are being felt and where maximum benefits can be had.

A RANGE OF SERVICES TO EMPOWER YOUR IMPLEMENTATION

Imprivata provides a range of consultative services to ensure that each project generates maximum benefit to the organization, clinicians, and patients. To do this, Imprivata clinical workflow specialists work with multi-disciplinary teams to ensure end user engagement.

"Imprivata OneSign has reduced the time it takes clinicians to access electronic medical records and other data, streamlining their workflow and improving productivity. We receive positive feedback from our clinicians, as they are able to access their data much more easily."

- Kristi Roose, IT Director at Mahaska Health Partnership

Imprivata provides a range of services designed to lay the foundations for a successful implementation. These include:

- **Clinical Workflow Analysis**

A benefits realization study conducted in partnership between the healthcare organization and the clinical and technical expertise available from Imprivata

- **Remote Clinical Solution Assessment**

The Remote Clinical Solution Assessment provides healthcare organizations with dedicated remote clinical professional services to drive the clinical value of a prospective project

The effect is maximized value from technology investments and driving adoption with clinical users, from the inception of a project.

Time for change

Understanding the clinical workflows of healthcare providers and organizations not only empowers clinicians and optimizes adoption of new technologies, but also facilitates improvements in patient experience and outcomes. In this rapidly changing digital world, with all of the benefits it brings to healthcare, surely that's the goal. After all, it's about time.



Imprivata is the digital identity company for mission- and life-critical industries, redefining how organizations solve complex workflow, security, and compliance challenges with solutions that protect critical data and applications without workflow disruption. Its platform of interoperable identity, authentication, and access management solutions enables organizations in over 45 countries to fully manage and secure all enterprise and third-party digital identities by establishing trust between people, technology, and information.

For more information, please contact us at 1 781 674 2700 or visit us online at www.imprivata.com

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"Documentation is a large part of the job in healthcare and anything that can be done to make that more efficient gives time back for us to spend with our patients...The integration of this technology has allowed for more accurate reporting of vital signs and patient data. It has decreased the delay in vital documentation and has returned time back to all of the staff."

- Evan Deighan RN, MSN, CMSRN at Summa Health