S&P CONSULTANTS
Cerner Millennium® Expertise

Engaging Clinicians for IT Success: Proven Methods From the Field

Technology has impacted the field of healthcare like few other professions—and with great speed. One of the results of this pace of change can sometimes be felt in the gap between your IT team's priorities and preferences—and those of your clinicians. The good news is that both sides are usually aligned around the desire to provide great patient care and to ensure that hospitals and healthcare organizations can continue their critical work by remaining financially healthy too.

Efficiency in billing practices and revenue cycle, for example, are now major factors in an organization's success—supported by technology. Electronic Health Records ("EHRs"), likewise, provide clinicians with powerful new ways of tracking patients across care settings. The communications between clinicians and administrators have evolved dramatically over the past decade, as well. That means that your IT projects (EHR, Revenue Cycle, LIS, etc.) can often have "make-or-break" implications for your organization—so getting everyone working together cooperatively is critical. Of course, this requires an openness and mutual understanding throughout an organization that can sometimes be difficult as busy professionals are necessarily focused on their own day-to-day tasks and objectives.

At S&P Consultants, we've spent the past quarter-century helping IT professionals, finance teams, and clinicians discover their common ground while collaborating empathetically and respectfully. We've been characterized by our clients as expert translators (and occasionally "peacemakers") between in-house IT staff, vendor resources, clinicians, and administrators.

When considering how the challenges of severely over-tasked clinicians impact their ability to engage in an IT effort, much of what we hear centers around a few key dynamics:

- Finding the technology difficult or unfamiliar
- Feeling that they're not being heard
- A sense of disconnect between their practical workflows and the structure imposed by technology requirements

S&P Consultants helps clients realize the full value in their IT investments by brokering a successful relationship among IT, clinical, and administrative functions. To start with, we leverage the proven efficacy of peer-to-peer interactions whenever possible. S&P's in-house doctors, nurses, pharmacists, etc. use their experience to help a client's clinical team understand the advantages of solutions like Cerner® Millennium™ or Cerner's Clinically Driven Revenue Cycle™ and how greater automation and optimized workflows can save them time and administrative headaches.

Here are some approaches to clinical engagement that we've found make for smoother IT/Clinical/Administrative projects:

DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

The ideal time to start engaging clinical stakeholders in the implementation process is before the contract is even signed. If you don't get it right, you're risking huge amounts of revenue, and many organizations don't spend the time needed to develop a strategy for bringing everybody to the table.

So, what's the best way to engage your clinicians? While it's crucial to respect your staff members' time, it's important to touch base with your clinical teams to actively engage them to find out:

- Perspective on the current system (including frustrations and challenges)
- What accommodations they foresee needing from new technology solutions
- How training can be personalized to fit their needs/specialties where possible
- A deep and nuanced understanding of their workflows, constraints, and priorities

Bringing any potential issues or roadblocks to the forefront at this stage if infinitely easier than troubleshooting them once the new system is in place. S&P Consultants can help you evaluate your current workflows and establish the right peer-to-peer relationships between your clinical, revenue, and technical experts.

From the Field

"Our clinical staff couldn't really know the impact Community Works would have on their workflows—and the financial people needed to update their workflows to feed into [a modern revenue cycle management solution.] ***It's important to look at the way you'll need to change your culture, not just your IT systems. You have to get folks to buy in.*** *And that's where S&P Consultants had a really positive impact. [Our S&P RevCycle consultant] was amazing. She knew a lot of billing edits that we were able to leverage to help our people get the most out of the new system. Everybody here, said without [our S&P resource] we would have had a big problem."*

UNDERSTAND SPECIFIC NEEDS

As anyone who has introduced new technology can appreciate, getting a system in place is one thing, but getting your clinicians to enthusiastically adopt it, is quite another. Many organizations make the mistake of just passing along the training documentation and moving on.

S&P's clinical resources understand first-hand how to organize training for all types of specialties and departments. What's more, their tenured expertise at the kind of at-the-elbow training and troubleshooting,can have a real impact on your team.

To achieve a meaningful engagement with your clinical staff, you have to take time to understand their concerns and the daily routines and headaches of a variety of often-siloed departments. Establishing a two-way understanding can help them appreciate the benefits of adopting a standardized approach to charge capture.

From the Field

"[S&P is] able to say, 'Here's what we've done with other clients...' So they've been able to guide us through this particular timeline, like a train-the-trainer type of thing. [Even with] other departments that have had some confusion, they just jumped right in and said, 'Okay, let me help you out.'

"And so they're not sitting at some table in the back room. They're literally elbow to elbow, helping you through the project, helping you through the different stages. And so that's been, from a standpoint of assistance, that's been valuable— just having somebody there willing to roll up the sleeves and jump in."

SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE

We have found time and again that issues with an EHR implementation often come down to a matter of poor translation. It often feels as if IT and clinical staff are speaking different languages, and it can be hard for the parties to see things from the other's perspective.

Focus on the implementation as a valuable asset in a way that will resonate with clinical staff members. For example, instead of employing technical jargon, you could rely on language like: "We're making a few adjustments to the charting process. We realize it's a pain, but we'll walk you through the process—and we're confident that this change will reduce headaches."

Whether it's a denial of claim code or capitation payments, converting Cerner jargon into clinical language can be a huge challenge, and you need to speak to different ways of working across various settings, from ambulatory to inpatient. S&P Consultants has licensed physicians and nurses on staff who can "talk the talk" with your clinical employees and help to get them involved and excited—or at least actively engaged and compliant.

From the Field

"I think of S&P's on-staff clinicians as our 'Interpretive Services' Department. They help us reach those 'a-ha moments' that enable our nurses and IT resources to align around common objectives and find the gaps—both in understanding and in workflows—that allow clinicians to see how they can get what they need from our system."

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Putting in the time to successfully engage your clinicians is just the beginning. Once the system has gone live, it's time to monitor the details to ensure you're getting the full benefit of your new EHR. If workflow issues do arise, respect your teams' time and try to work quickly to reduce redundant processes.

There's no one size fits all solution, but some benchmarks to judge overall EHR efficacy include:

- Rate of successful charge capture
- Patient access errors
- Length of time from appointment request to appointment
- Patient satisfaction scores

S&P Consultants will work with you in the weeks after implementation to make sure you're properly tracking the process and efficiently working through any issues

From the Field

"S&P has changed the relationship our revenue group has—both with our own IT department, and Cerner. They've lifted the relationship to a whole new level—and it wasn't just agreeing with everything we said either. They were very helpful in helping all parties understand the needs, priorities and practical capabilities of the other stakeholders, really serving as a 'translator' among the parties. We wouldn't be where we are if it wasn't for S&P."

DISCOVER THE S&P ADVANTAGE

With so much at stake, consider bringing in the S&P Advantage. S&P Consultants uses an implementation framework called S&P InTegrity℠ that binds your strategy to every implementation at every stage of the process. We provide support from consultants who are also clinicians, just like you.

From the Field

"Our CNO was very impressed with the nurse consultant from S&P—and she is not an easy person to impress. And because she had confidence in S&P's recommendations and decision-making, the entire project benefitted."

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