

white paper

IMPLEMENTING AN ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORD

A Client and Vendor Perspective

written by
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BON SECOURS KENTUCKY HEALTH SYSTEM



Introduction

Implementing an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) is a huge undertaking. Any project manager can tell you that there are too many moving parts for one person to get all of the work done alone. Proper planning and preparation improves project quality, positions the implementation for success, and ultimately reduces support costs.

Choosing the right partner early in the process, and working together to identify, implement and improvise will help ensure an on-time, on-budget, successful Activation.

Below are two viewpoints, one from the client and from the vendor, which contributed to a successful EMR implementation.

Client: Our Lady of Bellefonte Hospital
Local System Project Director: Justin Fuller, RN
Director of Clinical Informatics
Bon Secours, Kentucky

Vendor: DIVURGENT
Activation Manager: Ann Domenech

Start Early! Involve the Appropriate Parties in the Planning Process

Client's Viewpoint

When our hospital was getting ready for an EMR implementation, we were the seventh hospital in the Bon Secours system to implement our EMR. We had the 'lessons learned' from six sister hospitals to work with. But even with all of the history from our sister facilities on our side, we recognized that the work was still *really big*.

Our EMR implementation was scheduled for August, 2011. We had concerns about how significantly the EMR implementation was going to impact our medical staff and the patient-flow, so we decided to bring in a Physician Support vendor to assist us with that particular body of work. We brought the DIVURGENT Team in about three months ahead of time to begin planning and to give them an idea of our resources, our facility, and our market.

By deciding to bring in a vendor to help us through the process, we were able to focus on our unique challenges and leave the "mechanics" to our Enterprise Team and the vendor. The Enterprise Team focused on how our corporation had built the system, and how we would bring that system into the unique market our hospital is in. The DIVURGENT Team spent a lot of time working on logistics in the beginning. That freed me up as the Project Director to multitask more efficiently and manage larger pieces of work. From managing staff and provider training, to dealing with facility infrastructure problems - there are a million things to worry about during an EMR implementation. If there is any wisdom to gain from this article, it is this:

"Many hands make light work." Get yourself an extra pair of hands.

Vendors Viewpoint

Justin and the administration at Our Lady of Bellefonte Hospital (OLBH) in Ashland, KY, saw the wisdom in identifying and bringing in a properly vetted vendor to assist with the Physician Support schedule management piece of their Epic EMR Activation.

DIVURGENT had been fortunate to have played a role in the previous six “sister” hospitals, providing Physician Support and Trainers, but was asked to come in early and implement the Physician Support piece of Kentucky’s implementation.

As the dedicated Activation Manager for this project, getting to know Justin, the facility and the physician group, enabled me to encompass their project Mission and Vision. And by using the proper tools, in our case DIVURGENT’s ACTIVATE! Schedule Optimizer™, we were able to begin the process of identifying, securing and scheduling the required resources, which allowed us to bring this portion of the project in on time and under budget.

Becoming Justin’s partner and building on that relationship gave both of us the opportunity to focus on the tasks at hand. My main goal as Activation Manager was this: Make the implementation at OLBH successful! We scheduled weekly meetings, either on site or by phone, and I supplied Justin and his team with weekly progress reports. Justin was then able to focus his attention on the multitude of tasks required for his facility’s implementation.

Build a Working Relationship

Client’s Viewpoint

It’s not enough to agree that you need help. You have to know **how to work with** the help you have. Once we made the decision to bring DIVURGENT on-board for our implementation, Ann and I set right to work on learning how each other viewed the project, and what the needs were.

Building a working relationship is usually something that takes time. I’m only guessing, but **time** is probably not a resource you have a lot of.

If that’s the case, then your best bet is to be as transparent as you can. You need your vendor to know the distinctive nature of your facility. Each hospital has its own set of challenges and cultures that defines it. The vendor needs to understand that information.

You also need to be clear about the potential risks and pitfalls you may be facing together. You’ve brought this vendor in to help you with your implementation... give them as much information as you can to help them *help you*.

When you prepare the vendor ahead of time, it gives them the ability to be more nimble and responsive to the ever-changing health care environment you live in. You can plan all day long, but unexpected things happen. Give your vendor the chance to help you respond to those issues.

Vendors View Point

Because Justin and I took the time to build a relationship and understanding of the project's goals, we were able to work through process changes and last minute schedule changes together.

Having a partner that understands and anticipates the needs of the project, the nuances of the facility, the chain of command, the major players and the bottom line, enabled us to have a seamless transition throughout the Activation process.

There were 39 schedule changes during the course of this project. It is no easy task to respond instantly to the needs of the physicians and the ebb and flow of the hospital census during Activation, but we managed it well, and came in under budget. I can only credit this to the preparatory work we had put in prior to the Activation.

Building trust, understanding expectations, and gaining intimate knowledge of the physicians and the physician support resources we brought on-site ahead of time definitely eased some of the concerns for the client.

Justin's open attitude and willingness to "teach" me the nuances of OLBH, its staff and its vision, allowed me to anticipate needs and changes as we started the process of implementation.

The Budget, the Budget, the Budget

Client's Viewpoint

Nobody really likes to talk about it, but nothing is free. With the implementation of an EMR, the benefit to the patient is the ultimate focus. But it isn't the *only* focus.

With all of the health care reform changes that we're facing, not many healthcare organizations have a "warm, fuzzy feeling" about their financial futures. Putting an EMR into your organization is a great benefit to your patients and your organization, but it is going to cost money. Lots of money.

One way to reduce cost is to make sure you bring your vendor in early. It seems a small thing, but the scheduling of transportation and lodging can be a nightmare (depending on the size of your organization and the implementation). A lot of the challenges of 'logistics' is really just busy-work. It doesn't take a lot of "out-of-the-box" thinking to arrange transportation and lodging... but it does take a lot of time. (Did I mention that you probably don't have much time?)

An additional benefit of having the vendor work with you early is that they get a feel for the organization and the patient census. By understanding how your census works day-to-day and week-to-week, it will help your vendor with those quick decisions to reduce support staff on an ad hoc basis. Every dollar helps.

Vendor's Viewpoint

Having come onto the project three months prior to Activation, and working with Justin and the Bon Secours Enterprise Team, I was able to identify the number of hours needed for Physician support, the start/stop dates for the project and the specialty needs of the physicians, the OR and ER schedules.

Having this knowledge ahead of time gave me the opportunity to secure well-qualified, seasoned support resources for this

project. Identifying my team a month prior to Activation allowed us to work on the logistics piece (i.e. cost savings on flights, rental cars, etc.), and have hotel rooms and transportation secured. In this particular situation, the community didn't have a lot of hotels available. If we hadn't been involved early on, we would have had to secure lodging at hotels more than an hour away, which would have led to increased transportation costs for the client.

As the on-site Activation Manager for the Physician Support Team, I was able to implement immediate schedule changes (as needed). And by attending shift change huddles and leadership update meetings, I was able to convey any issues, hot topics or areas of concern immediately to my team. Being on site to manage the ebb and flow of a live hospital environment, having secured a strong, knowledgeable physician support team, and having my Schedule Optimizer to implement changes, gave me the ability to be flexible and still end the project under budget.

Start Strong. Finish Strong.

Client's Viewpoint

Once you've gotten through the organizing, strategizing, agonizing, and scrutinizing, you're ready to "turn it on."

As the day draws near for you to transition your facility from a paper system to an EMR, there is going to be a lot of anxiety. My mantra during the duration of the project was *"It's all about anxiety-abatement."* Putting an EMR in an organization is probably the biggest transformational project most organizations will go through in a lifetime. That kind of pressure is sure to increase anxiety, stress, and worry.

As a Project Manager, your job is to bring the EMR into the facility with as little disruption to operations as possible. No small task, but that task is exponentially harder when you allow anxieties to exist unnecessarily.

Work with your vendor to identify pockets of concern proactively. Get everything on the table and examine it from every angle. The more you know, the less you have to worry about.

When you have a confident knowledge about the status of your project, everyone around you will know it. When you're calm, they will be too (for the most part). But if you're panicked, then everyone will panic.

When July 31st came, we were all in the hospital board room preparing for the Activation. At around 2:00 AM, all of our hard work, perseverance, planning, preparation, and execution was about to be tested.

We received notification from the Enterprise Team that the system was ready. Our CNO made the announcement over the intercom system that "we were LIVE." We all clapped, laughed, hugged, and prayed. Because now it was time to actually support the go-live.

During the next 30 days, we had one of the most successful go-lives in our organization's history. A significant factor in our success was the preparatory work we did with our vendor.

Could we have done it without them? I suppose so. Would I want to? **No way.**

Vendor's Viewpoint

Working together, to organize, strategize, agonize and scrutinize, we finally reached the "moment of truth". It does not matter how many activations you've been too, each one is "new" and presents its own transformation process. The groundwork has been laid, the training is complete, the schedules are set and the support Teams are all in place. Time to take a BIG BREATH, and believe in the process.

Justin's job, and one he did exceptionally well, was to bring the EMR to this facility with minimal disruption to daily operations. Mine, was to support Justin and ensure the success of the implementation at OLBH. Be proactive, be flexible, have confidence in all the work that was done to come to this point, and get ready to Go-Live.

I had brought a well-seasoned, experienced Physician Support Team to the project. I credit OLBH with having the foresight to bring us in early and giving me the time I needed to "go out" and get the best resources possible. Now like a football coach, I could direct resources from the command center to "hot spots" as the need arose. I also had the flexibility to ramp up or down as needed, and maintain a tight line with the budget.

Justin and his organization gave us a wonderful Command Center to work from. We had all the right players at the table and could quickly discuss and resolve issues as they occurred. The Physicians could find us if needed, or walk into the room for help. I believe this alleviated a lot of anxiety for them, and helped maintain a calm, controlled atmosphere.

I love the countdown to "GO-LIVE". The anticipation, the anxiety, seeing the fruition of all the hard work and preparation by every individual at the facility comes to light. It is truly a thing of beauty to see the look of accomplishment on the faces of the nurses, the physicians and the facility leaders as they realize, "hey, we got this". Yes, the next 30 days was hectic, but the marathon started months ago, now they just need to cross the finish line.

Thank you Justin, for your openness, foresight, leadership and friendship. Congratulations on a successful Implementation.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Justin Fuller is a Registered Nurse working for Bon Secours Health System at their Kentucky hospital, Our Lady of Bellefonte Hospital (OLBH). Justin has over 10 years' experience as a Registered Nurse. His clinical background was primarily focused in cardiology. Justin worked in pre and post cardiac catheterization and pre and post open-heart-surgery as a floor nurse. He also spent several years as a lecturer and instructor for community health and Basic Life Support instruction at the high school level before pursuing a career in Nursing Administration. He currently serves as the Director of Clinical Informatics at OLBH.

Ann Domenech joined the DIVURGENT Team as an Activation Leader, after supporting several Go Lives with DIVURGENT in the ED environment. Her previous experience within the Healthcare industry gives her the expertise required to organize, schedule and implement the Physician Support platform for Epic Implementations.

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Bon Secours Kentucky Health System. Bon Secours means "good help" in French, and at Our Lady of Bellefonte Hospital moments of good help happen every minute of every day. We believe patients heal better when they know their caregivers care. And we do. Our doctors and nurses make it their mission - not merely their job - to provide compassionate, world-class care to every patient, every time.

In the spirit of our founding Sisters, we're here to bring good help and good health to the entire community, from Lloyd to Willow Wood to Hanging Rock and beyond. The Bon Secours Kentucky Health System is one of the best-performing hospitals in the nation and we're here to serve you.

DIVURGENT was founded by a team of consulting veterans who are well versed in the healthcare industry. As a premier healthcare consulting firm, DIVURGENT is focused on the business of hospitals, health systems and affiliated providers. We provide advisory, activation management, clinical transformation, and revenue cycle management services to help you improve patients' lives. Recognizing every organization is unique, we leverage the depth of our experienced consulting team to create customized solutions, utilizing best practices and methodologies.

OUR COMMITMENT

DIVURGENT is dedicated to helping our clients improve their operational effectiveness, financial performance and quality of patient care. Through thought leadership, providing value for our services and delivering innovative solutions, we are committed to improving the quality and safety of healthcare delivery for our clients and the communities they serve.

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