

White Paper

HOW IMPORTANT IS APPLICATION SUPPORT?

Unlike a billing question that can probably wait a couple of hours or even days, when you're face-to-face with a patient and have a question for your Electronic Health Record (EHR) provider, will they answer? And from where?

This is a vital question to find an answer to. Often medical practices invest their time evaluating different EHR vendor products, but never investigate how satisfactory a vendor's customer support might be. When a practice purchases an EHR, they are purchasing a support relationship they will have to depend upon for as long as they use their EHR.

Unfortunately, too many companies have decided that out-sourcing Customer Support to foreign countries is less expensive than training and offering US-based support. Situations such as this can have detrimental effect upon not only the productivity of a practice, but also patient care.

Whose Problem Is It?

Invariably problems arise between the EHR software and the IT infrastructure that it operates within. Unfortunately in some situations finger pointing can occur between the software support service and IT support services. Not only can situations like this result in lost productivity, but can be down-right aggravating, since neither side wants to take responsibility for resolving the problem.

In order to avoid these situations from occurring, it is important to follow the EHR vendors recommendations when it comes to hardware and IT infrastructure. These vendors know what products and services that will produce optimal efficiency and reliability for their product. Utilizing legacy equipment or other products because they are cheaper often results in increased costs and a loss in productivity.

While web hosting or cloud computing reduces the chances of conflicts from occurring, there still remains issues that are sometimes difficult to resolve. That is why it is important that the EHR vendor also be the web hosting company, or at least the company selected hosts several of the EHR vendor customers already.

By in large, most EHR vendors do not offer in-house hardware and other IT services. Although they may recommend sources for securing the required products and services finger pointing can never the less occur. There is another alternative, Value Added Resellers (VARs) are companies that are authorized by the EHR vendor to reseller their software. Often VARs can deliver both the software as well as the hardware and IT services. Since they are responsible for both the software and hardware as well as IT services, conflicts between software and hardware are resolved by a single support source. There can't be any finger pointing since the VAR is responsible for both.

Securing EHR software and associated technology can represent one of the largest purchases a medical practice may make. And it constitutes a long-term relationship with the vendor for support services. Therefore, while it is important to evaluate the features and functionality of the EHR software, it is equally important to evaluate the quality and timeliness of support you can expect after your EHR software has been installed.



Summary

Investigate an EHR vendors customer support

Some EHR vendors out-source their support

Finger pointing between software and hardware vendors can be aggravating

Follow EHR vendors recommendations for hardware and IT infrastructure

Web hosting can decrease conflicts but does not eliminate them

VARs can sometimes deliver both software and hardware thereby avoiding vendor finger pointing

EHR features and functions are important but don't forget to check out the level of support

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