

M&A Growth Produces 100+ EHRs for Archival

The Organization

One northeastern health system has a long history of growth through mergers and acquisitions (M&A), joining several hospitals and hundreds of ambulatory locations throughout the Middle Atlantic region. Today, the health system provides more than five million outpatient and over 70,000 inpatient visits annually.

The first merger started in the early 1990s when two organizations created the first multi-hospital healthcare system in the area. Over the years, M&A consistently served the organization as it continued to grow.

The Situation

The significant M&A growth that created the health system as it is known today, resulted in 100+ electronic health record (EHR) systems in the portfolio. This included Cerner Millennium, NextGen, MEDITECH, Cerner Envision, OBIX fetal monitoring, blood bank systems and more.

The organization determined that Epic would serve as its go-forward EHR which tipped off a massive project to rationalize and prioritize the large inventory of legacy systems for decommissioning. One of the first applications targeted for archival was a large Cerner Millennium.

The main driver of the archival project was the efficiency that the consolidation of clinical, financial and business records would have on the Health Information Management (HIM) team for Release of Information. Of note, included in the record consolidation were paper charts that got digitized and indexed. The second driver for archival was the financial benefit that legacy system decommissioning delivered to the Finance team. Finally, long-term compliance with record retention requirements and comprehensive security for its protected health information were important requirements for this health system.

With a small internal team that includes a dedicated project manager for archiving, the organization looked for a partner that could dig in to understand its current needs and help set a long-term plan to keep its clinical, business and financial data secure for the long haul.

CASE STUDY

Organizational Profile

- 11 hospitals & over 400 locations
- The Northeastern US
- Go-forward EHR: Epic
- Archiving 100+ legacy applications

Product

HEALTHDATA ARCHIVER

The Solution

The health system looked for an archiving vendor partner with broad experience in a wide variety of EHR systems and a project manager and team that could align and support its short-term and long-term goals. Harmony Healthcare IT's broad experience in working with more than 550 software brands – along with their certified and professional project managers on staff – positioned it well to be chosen as the health system's archiving partner.

With HealthData Archiver® deployed across the health organization, both teams continue to work through a well-organized priority list to decommission legacy systems and archive the data to fulfill retention requirements. The expanded solutions from Harmony Healthcare IT include a suite of products and services that consolidates data stores, reduces out of production system maintenance costs, mitigates technical risks, complies with record retention mandates, and offers interoperability capabilities. This is exactly what is needed as the health system continues to work through its lengthy inventory of legacy EHRs inherited through M&A.

Lessons Learned

Include archiving in M&A planning. It is helpful to incorporate archiving as part of M&A planning instead of after the fact. One must account for the time it will take to reclaim the data from the legacy EHR vendor. This alone can add 6-9 months to the timeline, depending on how responsive and cooperative that legacy vendor may be.

Have a dedicated internal project manager. Coordination of resources and project milestones will get an archival project off to a successful start. It is very important to have an internal resource who is focused on helping to obtain the application inventory and manage the archiving projects. This resource saves time and can eliminate roadblocks to keep project plans on track.

Create a realistic timeline. Set realistic expectations within the organization for how long it may take to obtain the legacy data and get it configured in the archive for long term use. It is important to keep track of legacy system maintenance contract renewals and work that into the project timeline.

Benefits of Archiving

- 1. Simplified access and workflows.** Clinicians can easily access historical records via Single Sign-On from Epic at the time of care. HIM can streamline its release of information workflows to make them more efficient and accurate.
- 2. Heightened security.** With legacy systems noted as the number one "bad practice" in terms of cybersecurity risks, removing legacy systems and applications is a step forward toward increased security and peace of mind. Further, with audit tools in place, there is less risk for unauthorized logins and access.
- 3. Cost savings.** Return on investment comes from removing hard costs for legacy system maintenance and upgrades.
- 4. Preparation for the future.** With interoperability and 21st Century Cures Act requirements continuing to evolve, the health system is set to securely deliver records when requested by patients.



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