



Workflow Observation

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Assessing current workflow when implementing a new or redesigning an existing automated system is instrumental to a successful implementation. This integrated approach involves key stakeholders, management staff and end users. The process will start with the initial stakeholder meeting, interviewing staff, observing workflow, analyzing the data through the recommendation process. The project manager should be kept abreast of the findings throughout the observation process as additional personnel or departments may need to be interviewed or additional workflow assessments performed.

1. Meet with the Stakeholders.

The person conducting or managing the assessment will need to meet with the stakeholders from Information Services (IS) and the clinical department. This will allow both departments the opportunity to define their respective goals, concerns and/or workflow issues that were previously identified. Both the clinical and technical departments will also define their goals, concerns and/or high level issues that they associate with the assessment. The clinical department may want to automate processes that will improve regulatory compliance, while the organization's goal is to automate all clinical documentation. At this point, the time frame for conducting the assessment should be defined and the contact person within the organization should be identified. The person performing the assessment will want to perform a high level review of the organizational and departmental policy and procedures associated with the assessment, if needed, the policies and procedures should be updated.

2. Interview/Focus Groups

Interview first level managers regarding the current workflow processes and goals that they feel are important. Those managers will often define the workflow that is outlined in organizational and departmental policy and procedures. While conducting focus groups with the end users will provide them with an opportunity to discuss design factors which impede their workflow. The focus group should include clinicians from different units and shifts to ensure variations in workflow are identified. Remember to ask the staff what they think would streamline their processes. The information obtained in these sessions can be used in the development of a questionnaire/survey to obtain statistical data of issues and potential solutions which the majority of the staff deems as important.

3. Workflow Observation

Observe workflow on all shifts and several units that the department conducts business. Perform the assessment on multiple units and shifts as each one will have unique needs and process issues. Distribute the questionnaire/survey to each shift and unit. Always ask open ended questions regarding the process and workflow; do not make assumptions. The

observation may reveal that some workflow processes are performed to meet regulatory requirements or that is the way “it” was always done. Make notations of the ability to access workstations (Enough stations for the shift? Ergonomically correct? Where are the stations located?). Note the workflow within the department, technology utilized and the staff’s ability to access workstations. Write everything down as some processes may require additional follow up. After the data has been gathered and documented, it is time to analyze the results and determine the best solutions and approaches for the individual organizations.

4. Analysis

Analyze the system and the questionnaire/survey results. The survey results will provide statistical data of the issues and solutions that the end users identified as being important. Review the current system, as an end user, following the current workflow steps. Research potential solutions and conduct a literature review of peer organizations. The purpose of performing a Gap analysis is to define the steps required to move from the current to the new workflow, but this documentation often does not take into account regulatory requirements or end user satisfaction. When completing the analysis include a category that identifies processes as Patient Safety, Regulatory and/or Clinician Satisfaction. Categorizing the workflow steps in this method will aide in determining the prioritization of the step. The projects should be prioritized as high, medium, and low. Categorizing the projects will aide in this step. Develop a tool listing the projects for the clinical department to review and prioritize when presenting the recommendations.

5. Recommendations

The recommendations should be categorized by the type and benefit of the change and presented in several possible project timelines. The recommendations could be the type of change, process, system build and/or categorized by work effort (Information Services), satisfaction (end users) and/or compliance (The Joint Commission). Provide documentation to support the proposed changes, for example: patient safety issues visualize during workflow observations, duplicate work efforts, peer research, end user statements. Providing several project timelines will allow the client to visually see the number of changes recommended and potential timeframe from phase zero to implementation. It should also include several examples of changes that could occur simultaneously and the pros and cons of each timeline.

The methodology is crucial to a successful implementation of a new solution or redesign of an existing solution. This process identifies the key stakeholders’ beliefs of the changes needed and the solutions they want implemented, while involving the clinical staff and learning the issues that affect their workflow and results they feel would help them and improve patient care.

If you would like more information please contact VCS at 610.444.1233 or email us at vcs@getvitalized.com.