ECM Agility for Healthcare

Harnessing Technology to Achieve Operational Efficiency and Responsiveness

Laserfiche®

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In what other industry is agility—the ability to react quickly, flexibly and intelligently to changing conditions—as important as it is in healthcare, where lives are, quite literally, on the line?

Technological advances have made many new procedures and methods of diagnosis and treatment possible; and yet, with stringent privacy mandates, increased insurance demands and a possible overhaul of the national medical system to contend with, how many healthcare organizations today would describe themselves as "agile"? How many would say that they are run as efficiently, as responsively and as cost-effectively as they can possibly be?

Some argue that, as organizations increasingly adopt electronic health records (EHR) systems in the wake of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and its goal of "computeriz[ing] health records to reduce medical errors and save on health care costs," agility will naturally follow. This is a mistake.

Healthcare organizations that use EHR systems do reap many benefits, but medical records comprise only a fraction of the content these companies handle. EHRs do not solve the problems associated with storing, locating, routing, approving and reviewing explanation of benefits (EOB) forms, invoices, purchase orders, signed privacy acknowledgments, personnel files, compliance records and more.

This is where enterprise content management (ECM) comes into play. ECM allows organizations to centrally and securely manage all of their content while still offering individual departments and locations the flexibility to adapt their work processes to changing conditions.

According to Gail Donovan, executive vice president and COO at Continuum Health Partners in New York, this balance is essential: "Because health care is so local, it's very important that the authority for [business] operations is at the hospitals themselves." But working in the heavily-regulated healthcare industry, she added, highlights the need for standardization—something that high-quality ECM solutions are more than qualified to carry out.

The Big Picture

- Organizational agility is essential for healthcare organizations of all sizes, and yet it is increasingly difficult to achieve.

- Many believe that EHR systems promote agility, but they fall short in several key ways.

- Enterprise content management (ECM) allows organizations to centrally and securely manage all of their content, providing a critical complement to HIS, EHR, and other clinical and back-office applications.

- An agile ECM system offers individual departments and locations the flexibility to adapt their work processes to changing conditions, increasing organizational efficiency and responsiveness.

- Organizations that use ECM to standardize their approach to information management eliminate data silos, automate core business processes and minimize ongoing maintenance demands for IT personnel.

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Leading healthcare companies of all sizes are turning to ECM to dramatically improve the business productivity and responsiveness of the entire organization—not just the areas that deal with patient charts. Pressured by regulations and driven by a clear need to streamline operations, these organizations are harnessing the power of ECM to:

- **Anchor their information management infrastructures,** eliminating departmental information silos and providing timely access to all relevant content.

- **Automate core business processes,** improving staff productivity and the level of patient care.

- **Ease administration and maintenance demands** on the IT department by standardizing on an extensible, interoperable and rapidly-deployable solution.

This white paper outlines the benefits associated with implementing ECM—for individual departments and business units, for the IT department and for the organization as a whole.

Agile Information Management: Standardizing Your Approach with ECM

As more and more content flows in and out of organizations—and as regulatory and compliance mandates raise pressures on IT departments—the need to control unstructured content and improve data governance is increasing.

Enterprise content management (ECM) has moved way beyond the old finding-and-filing days to become a foundational component of data governance. Best-in-class ECM is integrative middleware that expands organically throughout the organization, crossing departmental boundaries and integrating with other line-of-business applications and legacy systems to manage and process information—eliminating data silos along the way.

The Dangers of Data Silos

Managing multiple departmental systems is expensive and complicated for IT staff, who have to keep track of information that's spread over multiple locations. More often than not, these siloed systems end up compounding the problems they were supposed to solve.

The agile organization values technology that allows it to be quick, resourceful and adaptable, rapidly and consistently delivering results in the face of uncertainty and change. It recognizes that data silos prevent key stakeholders from gaining a holistic view of the organization's priorities and performance. Therefore, it seeks ECM that is built on an open architecture—maximizing interoperability and simplifying integration with existing systems in multiple departments and locations. For example, ECM that is built on the Windows Workflow Foundation (WF) allows companies to integrate primary applications and existing workflows into ECM workflows using WF and the .NET framework.

Eliminating information silos sometimes raises concerns about data security, but data silos do not protect confidential information; on the contrary, they complicate information security by requiring IT staff to manage data in multiple systems. Agile ECM systems have robust, role-based security features that prevent unauthorized departments and employees from accessing protected information. And by centralizing control of business records spread across disparate content repositories, organizations ensure that data is consistent, reliable, useful and available, simplifying enterprise risk management and compliance.

By standardizing on an agile ECM system, healthcare organizations boost performance by increasing information accessibility and security throughout the enterprise, eliminating data silos and enabling key stakeholders to make better-informed decisions.

EHR without ECM: A Silo Waiting to Happen

Medical organizations that use EHR systems reap many benefits, but deploying EHR without ECM creates one more data silo. Medical records comprise only a fraction of the content that healthcare organizations generate and manage. For example, EHRs do not handle:

- External lab results.
- Medical records from outside providers.
- EOB forms.
- Privacy acknowledgments.
- Invoices.
- Purchase orders.
- Personnel files.
- Compliance records.

ECM centrally and securely manages all of an organization's content, allowing it—for example—to link supporting patient information with current medical records so that all of a patient's content is accessible to authorized users at the same time.

FCI Links ECM to EHR to Eliminate Data Silos

The Fertility Centers of Illinois (FCI) implemented ECM alongside its EHR system, creating a digital repository of charts containing all the documentation relevant to each patient. Each chart is divided into 16 sections, including Demographics, Insurance, Previous Medical Records, Ultrasounds and X-Rays, Lab Results and so on. According to Bonnie Kelly, IS supervisor at FCI, "With the integration, our doctors have access to every bit of their patients' records, both current and historical."

Using ECM, FCI designed a process that accelerates admissions and makes information readily accessible:

- A template in the EHR system prints a collection of header sheets for each chart.

- Header sheets contain a keyword (NEWF) that tells Laserfiche it is dealing with a new record.

- Patient's last name, first name, middle initial, social security number and birthday are printed onto the header. There is a new header sheet for each chart section.

- Laserfiche Quick Fields reads the information off the header sheets and creates a file (including subfolders for each chart division) for each new patient.

- Laserfiche files new charts alphabetically within the folder structure, and files each patient's documents within the appropriate subfolders in his or her chart.

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Agile Business Processes: ECM in Everyday Use

Standardizing on ECM doesn't just provide a consistent way of viewing, storing and accessing information, it also gives the organization a centralized, flexible and secure way to create automated, repeatable processes in every department.

With ECM, user rights and privileges can be configured so that individual facilities, departments and even individual users retain control over their own filing structures and business processes, while the IT department retains central control over information storage, disposition and security.

Not only does this speed and simplify collaboration by automating content-related activities, it also offers centralized control of business records and ensures that data is consistent, reliable, useful and available. In this way, standards and security are enforced, but no one is compelled to adopt an aggravating or time-consuming new practice that does not make sense for a particular situation.

Easily Obtain User Acceptance

No matter how many business benefits an ECM system can deliver, if end users don't buy into the new solution, it will sit on the shelf collecting dust. To help staff get up to speed quickly, look for an ECM system that includes familiar Windows features, such as right-click menus and flexible folder structures.

Todd Blum, CEO for Ear, Nose, and Throat Associates of South Florida, noted that his company transitioned to its ECM system seamlessly because it is so user-friendly: "Fifteen minutes of training and [the staff was] up and running."

Intuitive ECM that balances central control with local flexibility injects a healthy dose of agility into any organization. More specifically, ECM will enable departments across the organization to:

- Improve patient service.
- Accelerate payment cycles.
- Reduce the risks and costs associated with compliance.
- Enhance back-office processes.

Improve Patient Service

Whether or not the organization has already implemented an EHR system, hard-copy records begin to accumulate the moment a patient enters the waiting room. ECM streamlines admissions procedures and simplifies the work of front-desk personnel by allowing them to quickly scan and process insurance cards, driver's licenses, patient histories, lab results, referrals, privacy notice acknowledgments and other documents—much of which is not handled by EHR. Once this information resides in the ECM repository, staff can easily link it to electronic medical records stored in the EHR, access all of it and review it when the patient arrives for future visits.

Agile ECM systems automatically:

- Name scanned documents.
- Correctly file existing patients' scanned documents.
- Create new folders for new patients.
- Populate document template fields.
- Link scanned content to HIS and/or EHR applications.

Capturing metadata such as name, Social Security number and birthday enables users to easily search the repository and quickly retrieve needed content, improving the level of staff productivity and customer service. Furthermore, better access to all relevant information improves the quality of patient care by:

- Reducing gaps in communication between healthcare providers.
- Decreasing duplicate testing.

Finally, by creating digital copies of admissions items, the organization eliminates the unnecessary overhead expense associated with copying, filing, transporting and storing paper documents.

Improving Patient Service at BC Biomedical

BC Biomedical (BCB) has grown to comprise more than 40 leading practitioners in all disciplines of laboratory medicine. According to Business Systems Analyst/Project Manager Christine Fiorucci : "We have more than 700 employees, administer 440 types of tests, and see about 6,000 to 8,000 patients daily, so we desperately needed a content management system that would enable us to store and retrieve vital patient information instantly and across our multiple centers."

"The old way of doing things around here was extremely time-consuming and ineffective, especially when we got phone requests for additional information," Fiorucci said. "It definitely took staff time away from our patients. We now have a total turnaround time of four hours because Laserfiche has helped us multitask across several departments. I cannot stress enough how reliable, fast and easy the system is. Laserfiche has impacted our entire organization in a positive manner."

Furthermore, the ability to view patient requisitions online streamlines procedures such as test confirmation, doctor information and patient diagnosis. "Life after Laserfiche is greatly simplified! Now that we've improved office efficiency, we can focus on our goal of advancing health one patient at a time," Fiorucci concluded.

Accelerate Payment Cycles

Billing operations are among those most subject to excessive paper burdens and cumbersome processes. ECM streamlines the billing process by eliminating time-consuming searches and providing claims processors and service representatives with instant access to information. Staff members scan charts and other documentation at the point of service, and the ECM system automatically routes it through the verification, coding and billing workflow. On-demand access to EOBs, claims, statements and remittance information also contributes to shortened billing cycles and allows faster discrepancy resolution.

Iredell Memorial Hospital provides a dramatic example of the benefits of ECM to the billing department. Prior to implementing ECM, the hospital was forced to write off approximately $40,000 per month due to lost and misplaced records, since staff had no way to properly code and bill for the visits. According to Marsha Hunter, Iredell's medical records director, since the implementation, "We haven't lost a single record." Today, the billing process is faster and more efficient, and no revenue is lost due to misplaced records.

With ECM, billing departments:

- Cut down on the amount of time it takes to find documents.
- Eliminate misplaced files.
- Free up storage space.
- Reduce the number of charges posted to the wrong account.
- Accelerate the department's response to patient requests.

EOB Management Efficiencies

Even though more and more payers are delivering electronic EOBs, the significant time and effort involved with managing remaining paper EOBs makes this an area where ECM can produce substantial and measurable time savings and efficiency improvements.

The ability of an ECM system to extract all of the data from the scanned EOBs means that an individual transaction can be found on the basis of any known or partially known data, including patient name, claim number, date of service, etc. **The time to search and retrieve a particular EOB can be conservatively condensed from 10 minutes to 15 seconds—forty times faster.**

Reduce the Risks and Costs Associated with Compliance

Protecting the integrity of patient records is crucial to the success of the organization. To comply with HIPAA privacy rules and Joint Commission patient safety goals, companies must balance information security with the proper level of accessibility to ensure that providers have the information they need to manage patient care. Best-in-class ECM systems serve as the records management cornerstone of these compliance initiatives by providing comprehensive security that protects sensitive information while still allowing authorized personnel to instantly access necessary data.

With ECM, healthcare organizations:

- Use audit trails to demonstrate adherence to established retention and access procedures.

- Ensure proper destruction of expired patient records.

- Minimize the risk of non-consensual release of protected health information by storing patient information in a secure repository that limits access by user, role, folder, document and/or data field.

According to Iredell's Hunter, an agile ECM system has enabled the hospital to "set security levels for each department. We can control access to the system, chart and document level. We are able to run audits on what records are accessed, view any problems and make sure records aren't being printed out by people who shouldn't have access to them. The security levels are great because we give a lot of people read-only access and that helps us know that records are secure."

Tracy Guzman-Barron, administrative services supervisor at the Fertility Centers of Illinois, also appreciates the security ECM affords: "It's much safer having patient information in a secure, electronic repository than to have paper copies of records lying around on people's desks," she said. "No one can access Laserfiche without a log-in and a password. Even then, everyone's level of access is tailored specifically to their role and responsibilities."

Putting role-based security in place is simplified when ECM user licenses are linked to Windows Active Directory® accounts, automatically authenticating users with their Active Directory credentials. This allows administrators to assign Laserfiche rights and privileges directly to Windows trustees, eliminating the need to maintain multiple accounts for each user.

Enhance Back-Office Processes

Although there is currently a great deal of focus on the efficiencies that can be gained by employing EHRs, these systems are focused exclusively on patient records. In contrast, ECM provides back-office benefits across the entire organization, including:

- **Accounting:** Simplify the payment cycle by automatically routing requisitions and linking documents that must be matched or reviewed for payment, such as purchase orders, bills of lading and invoices.

- **Credentialing:** Streamline the credentialing process by scanning and organizing payer applications, diplomas, licenses, CVs, CMEs, and contracts.

- **Facilities Management:** Manage property and equipment purchase records, warranties, tax forms, lease agreements and repair and maintenance contracts.

- **Human Resources:** Automate the hiring and HR onboarding process, secure paperwork in employees' personnel files and manage record retention schedules.

- **Legal:** Manage partnership and joint venture agreements, case files, business and employment contracts, compliance records and correspondence.

In addition to ECM's comprehensive storage, retrieval, search and security capabilities, production-level capture and processing tools minimize manual data entry and automatically sort and store imaged and electronic documents, improving staff efficiency in all departments. Workflow functionality enables any department to automate collaborative business processes, saving staff time and boosting productivity.

Long deployment schedules and a lack of systems interoperability present two key challenges to the successful implementation of healthcare technology. Unfortunately, the ECM marketplace is rife with solutions that are difficult to deploy, confusing to configure and complex to administer. This is why it is essential to stay away from vendors that have cobbled together a set of complicated tools that require major investments in programming or professional services.

By selecting agile ECM tools that can be configured locally yet controlled centrally, the organization gives local decision makers the ability to configure local solutions throughout the enterprise and avoids using consultants, programmers and in-house IT staff for all but the most strategic ECM work.

Agile ECM solutions are engineered for maximum scalability, interoperability and ease of administration. Maintenance is simple because they provide extensive support for standard Windows administrative tools such as MMC, Event Tracing for Windows, WMI and the Windows Event Log. Flexible configuration allows departmental databases to reside in separate locations with individualized security settings.

Furthermore, agile ECM systems offer rapid deployment, streamlined development and support for the HL7 protocol—which simplify integration with clinical and back-office applications such as:

- Accounting.
- Coding.
- EHR.
- Hospital information systems.
- Practice management.

According to Iredell's Hunter, "At the end of just two weeks… we had a fully functional system. Getting this kind of technology in place normally takes months."

ECM Enhances SharePoint at Spindletop MHMR Services

Spindletop MHMR Services integrated Laserfiche with SharePoint in order to bring more comprehensive content management capabilities to its SharePoint intranet and "centralize access to patient records without forcing employees to go out of their way," said Spindletop CIO Jerry Carnley.

The integration has had many benefits, but best of all from Carnley's perspective as a CIO is that because it supports developers who need to extend collaboration, scan images and set up workflows to respond to business needs, deployment was quick, easy and affordable. There was no need to hire expensive programmers or IT consultants and no need to build customized plug-ins from scratch. In addition, the intuitive user interface makes the solution easy to administer, since drag-and-drop functionality enables IT staff to permit line-of-business employees to easily make changes to existing workflows and folder trees without IT staff assistance.

Business Agility: Balancing Flexibility and Control

Organizations have always struggled to balance centralized control with individual autonomy. On one side lie the back-office policies and support systems that govern how work is done. These systems are designed to make the organization more efficient and may be mandated by leadership or required by law. On the other side sit knowledge workers, equipped with skills and expertise developed through years of experience. These managers and frontline employees understand the importance of process, but they bristle under too much top-down discipline. They want the freedom and flexibility to create their own processes—and study after study shows that the more employees feel empowered, the more productive they tend to be.

According to recent research conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit, 80% of the organizations that have implemented formal initiatives to improve business processes over the past three years have faced employee resistance. Three major causes of this reluctance to change were:

- The new process added more work (31%).

- Employees had little or no say in determining the new process (31%).

- The new process didn't map to the way employees thought their jobs should be done (28%).

By granting individual facilities, departments and users control over their own filing structures and business processes, agile ECM solutions enable healthcare organizations to neutralize these objections to change. The central office creates organization-wide templates and standards for managing content, and then local decision makers determine the best ways to work with it within their individual groups.

In this way, filing structures and automated workflows can readily be configured to mirror existing processes and procedures, guaranteeing swift system acceptance and enthusiastic use. Local decision makers are also able to easily make changes to their processes and filing structures midstream in order to meet changing business or market conditions, all without sacrificing the organization's control over its information infrastructure—or having to possess deep technical expertise.

"You can't take an inflexible approach [to the local agenda] at the corporate level," said Continuum Health Partners' Gail Donovan. "We've become more sophisticated in our ability to define what's best for both sides."

Business Benefits

In addition to the benefits that accrue to everyday users of the ECM system—including greater admissions efficiency, faster payment cycles, simplified compliance with industry regulations, more efficient back-office processes, faster, more comprehensive access to patient information and simplified system administration—the organization as a whole will also gain:

- **Elimination of data silos.** Data silos are dangerous for many reasons, but primarily because they prevent key stakeholders from gaining a holistic view of the organization's priorities and performance. Best-in-class ECM systems are built on an open architecture to maximize interoperability and simplify integration with existing systems in multiple departments and locations. By increasing information accessibility and collaboration throughout the enterprise, healthcare organizations boost performance by enabling key stakeholders to make better-informed decisions.

- **Increased record security.** Stringent privacy laws dictate that healthcare organizations protect patient information. ECM stores patient information in a secure repository that limits access by user, folder, document and/or data field. Spindletop's Carnley said, "We no longer have lengthy processes to obtain or store records—employees have instant access to records through our password-protected intranet site. Employees only have access to the patient records they manage. Other confidential client, employee and financial records are not accessible outside the department."

- **Enhanced productivity.** "Around thirty percent of the time, we'd need a document that was misfiled or 'temporarily lost,'" said the director of operations at Central Oregon Radiology Associates. "Searches for these documents could take anywhere from five minutes to three days." Instant search and retrieval eliminates wasted staff time spent looking for missing documents. In addition, workflow functionality automates collaborative business processes, eliminating redundancy by reducing the need for manual data entry and automatically routing documents to the appropriate people for review.

- **Cost savings.** According to Iredell's Hunter, "In healthcare, real estate is probably the most expensive thing we have. So if I can free up office space, I'm thrilled." In addition to the efficiencies acquired by eliminating filing rooms and cabinets from the office, companies experience savings by reducing the need for:

  - Off-site storage.

  - Mailing and couriering.

  - Paper and photocopying.

  - Transcription.

  - Records management employees.

- **Effortless disaster recovery planning.** Digital archiving simplifies disaster recovery and business continuity planning by allowing backups of entire records repositories to be stored on durable, compact CDs, DVDs or other media. According to the CEO of Multi-Med, a medical billing company that survived an arsonist's attempt to burn down its office building, "Even if the building had been completely leveled, all of our information would have been backed up, right to the minute of the event. We could have been back up and running within a day, two at the most."

In sum, if agility is something your organization strives for, standardizing on an ECM platform such as Laserfiche can help you achieve your goals. By leveraging enterprise content management, healthcare organizations enhance their information management strategy without hampering the productivity of the IT group or frontline employees.

Laserfiche®
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The Laserfiche Institute teaches staff, resellers, and current and prospective clients how to use Laserfiche most effectively. As part of this mission, the Institute conducts more than 500 Webinars each year, covering a variety of topics. The Institute also hosts an annual conference where members of the Laserfiche community attend presentations and network to share ideas and learn best practices. Additionally, the Institute conducts a number of regional training sessions and provides resellers with content for more than 100 user conferences each year.

The Institute also develops and distributes educational material through the Laserfiche Support Site. On this Website, clients can access training videos, participate in online forums and download technical papers and presentations that help them become savvier ECM users.

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