

## Epic System Optimization

from Noel Nicely Allender, *Beacon Partners Epic Practice Director*



### *Is optimization worth the time and resources during this time of cut backs?*

As healthcare facilities and providers are facing greater pressure to streamline their operations, one area that should be considered is system optimization. In order to ensure a well-functioning EMR, system optimization is crucial, yet rarely fully utilized. Is optimization worth the time and resources during our time of cut backs? Beacon Partners emphatically responds YES!

After spending years to implement Epic into your organization, not taking the time to revisit workflows and users' skills can lead to issues down the road. Optimization leads to greater user satisfaction and time efficiencies.

After end users have been engaged and Live on the system for a period of time, a deeper understanding of the system's capabilities are realized. Some of your users find helpful shortcuts and tools, which could greatly benefit other users who may be struggling. Whether you are looking to implement new features and improve build or to install new versions of Epic to access additional features and stay current with technology, to get the most out of your Epic investment, a continual performance improvement methodology should be utilized.

Beacon Partners' System Optimization Methodology applies the five key elements of the Beacon Process (Vision, Change Management, Workflow Integration, Communication and Measurement). Our structured methodology ensures that assessments are conducted in a well-managed, consistent approach regarding planning, organizing, directing and controlling the necessary facets for successful system optimization. Before recommending changes, our team will assess and evaluate your existing infrastructure and work with you to develop an optimization plan.

*Beacon Partners made an immediate, valuable contribution during a critical period of the Epic upgrade at Northwestern to ensure that all issues were resolved without delay.*

A good place to start is with department workflows. Each department should be surveyed to see what problems they are having and for any ideas staff may have to improve workflows. It is important to identify what is working within each department and build off of the positives. There should be a prioritization process to delineate between enhancement requests, future enhancements and fixes.

The optimization team should also be well versed in the upcoming Epic releases to determine whether a workaround is necessary to fulfill a functionality or workflow issue. For instance, one significant change is that the new Epic's *Summer 2009* release streamlines the look of Hyper-space by giving the user more working space. Most of the menus previously available, such as Patient Care, Tools and

Administration, are now accessible from the Epic button, allowing the user a larger working space.

Determining a benefits realization plan will assist in procuring the resources to initiate the optimization process. Frequently there are not only patient care benefits achieved, but also significant financial pay-back benefits through system optimization and increased end-user satisfaction.

Without optimization it is easy for important workflows to fall by the wayside. Optimizing your system can also aid in user confidence. It is important for physicians and staff to know their organization is invested in the implementation of Epic. Taking the time and resources to revisit the work completed is never a waste, as it will always benefit any organization.

Contact Noel at [nallender@beaconpartners.com](mailto:nallender@beaconpartners.com)

**Success Story:** To learn about Beacon Partners' Epic Optimization Engagement at Northwestern Medical Foundation, go to: [Beacon Partners Success Stories](#).

## Current Beacon Partners' Epic Engagements\*

Baylor College of Medicine  
Children's Hospital Boston  
Children's Hospital of Denver  
Cook Children's Health Care  
Cooper Health System  
Driscoll Children's Hospital  
Fletcher Allen Health Care

Group Health Associates  
Michigan Medical  
Northwestern Medical Faculty  
Park Nicollet Health Services  
Parkland Health and Hospital  
Premier Health Partners

Riverbend Medical Group  
Sparrow Health System  
Tri-Health Inc.  
University of California Davis  
University of Chicago Hospitals  
University of Texas Southwest  
University of Washington

\*Partial listing of Beacon Partners' current Epic clients

### ARRA Resource Center - An Editorial from Kevin Burchill, ESQ., FACHE, Director

Are the offers to provide financing to prepare for the federal information technology (IT) initiatives a *good thing* or just the latest examples of ways for US businesses to commit their futures with no clear means of paying for those futures?

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has spawned yet another potential lending scheme that needs to be looked into carefully before signing on the dotted line. Healthcare IT giants (like GE and now IBM) are offering *financing* for organizations to bring necessary IT programs online in time to take advantage of the \$19b of federal funding slated to begin in 2011.

On its face, the financing offers present an option for currently cash-strapped facilities to make the requisite investment in a *certified health IT system* now and become *shovel ready* in time to take advantage of the maximum incentive payments offered through Medicare or Medicaid. And, the flexible payment terms would allow for future repayments based upon the ultimate receipt of those governmental dollars.

For more of this editorial viewpoint, go to:

[Beacon Partners' ARRA Resource Center](#)

### Spotlight on Cost Control

These trying economic times continue to stress the importance of looking at new and creative ways to manage healthcare organizations. The renewed focus on cost control should not be a *flavor of the month* approach; rather it needs to become part of how front-line managers do their jobs in real time.

Whether in regard to an investment in information technology (IT) with the aim of receiving incentive payments under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the uncertainty of *Obamacare* healthcare reform discussions or even the capital expenditures necessary to update physical plants stretched to the brink of their useful lives, healthcare leaders cannot afford any missteps.

An uncertain future has executives re-grouping and re-thinking priorities. Organizations well-grounded in their missions, with solid foundations built upon their values, are certainly better prepared to adjust their visions in the near term and use operationally-based tactics to maneuver ahead. Right now, being directionally correct is as or more important than being politically correct.

To read more go to:

[Beacon Partners' Press Room](#)

**To join our Epic, MEDITECH or GE Advisory Mailing List, email  
[advisory@beaconpartners.com](mailto:advisory@beaconpartners.com).**

An Epic-Approved Consulting Firm Since 1999, Beacon Partners provides the proven expertise to enhance your Epic system. Beacon Partners is the leading provider of organizational performance improvement services including IT adoption, business and clinical operations management, strategic advisory and technical solutions to the healthcare community.

Please visit <http://www.beaconpartners.com> and Beacon Partners' special healthcare information portal, <http://www.spotlightonhealthcare.com>.