

# Five ways to improve the healthcare user experience

*How managing unstructured content can make life easier for your IT users*

Unstructured information, in some form or another, plagues practically every healthcare organization. It's the content that resides outside your organization's core systems and processes. For patient care, it's a conservative estimate that 75 percent of patient information – paper or electronic – that exists outside your EMR. In patient finance, it's the data outside your billing and financial systems. And in accounting, it lives beyond the reach of your ERP system.

But why is unstructured information an issue, and how can effectively managing it improve the user experience? The quick answer is that by its very nature, unstructured content annoys clinicians and staff. They have to find it. They have to wait for it. They have to worry about whether it is lost or misplaced. It simply impedes their ability to do their jobs effectively.

In this article, we'll look at five steps you can take to manage this content, each of which will make life easier for the people who rely on your IT systems to help them do their jobs.

## **Step 1: Identify it**

Before you think of ways to better manage your unstructured content, you first need to understand what it is. For each organization, this content can be a different assortment of documents and information across all departments.

For example, in care delivery, unstructured content can be everything from faxed orders and diagnostic images to the actual paper chart. In accounting departments, invoices and the information surrounding specific financial transactions often exist as unstructured content. Paper EOBs and EDI transactions similarly hamper processes in patient financial services.

The list goes on, but the key here is to understand the nature of the unstructured content each department faces. Talk to the people who work there. Then you can take steps to get it under control.

## Step 2: Get it out of the way

Odds are, paper and other physical content like faxes, EKGs, photocopies and patient charts are in someone's way. Sifting through a stack of faxes for that one piece of paper a nurse needs leads to frustration and reduces time spent caring for patients. It also increases the likelihood that another piece of information may be lost or misfiled. Even if your organization's paper content is safely stored in a central filing location, that storage costs money and space that might be better allocated to patient care.

Here's where enterprise content management (ECM) can help. An ECM solution will allow you to capture the diverse range of information and content within your organization – paper, faxes, diagnostic and digital images, insurance cards, patient IDs and more. By capturing that content and eliminating the need for its physical storage and management, you help reduce staff's frustrations about navigating a sea of paper to find what they need. Saving on storage and filing costs also demonstrates a true return on investment sure to please the more financially minded in your organization.

## Step 3: Put it somewhere safe

Capturing that unstructured content is only the beginning. You also need somewhere to put it. An ideal ECM solution provides you with a single, secure repository for electronic storage of this unstructured content, helping to reduce complexity in your IT environment by eliminating disparate, disconnected content silos.

Unstructured information also poses a security risk. An ECM solution securely stores this content, reducing the risk of a HIPAA violation. Additionally, ECM systems that provide audit trails make compliance with Joint Commissions, Sarbanes Oxley and other initiatives much simpler. Making life easier for those users and constituents demonstrates the true value of your department and its portfolio of solutions.

## Step 4: Make it easy to find

For this content to be useful, the people who need it should be able to find it easily and quickly. Integrated with your organization's core applications, an ECM solution provides instant access to content within those systems, often with a simple click of the mouse.

For clinicians, that means finding information once in paper charts quickly within the EMR. For those in patient financial services, it means finding transactional billing data within the billing system instead of on an EOB or isolated EDI transaction. And for those in finance and accounting, it means finding an invoice within the ERP system.

Ideally, users of a well-integrated ECM solution might not even be aware of its existence. They simply find what they need within the systems they know and use every day. Not only does this make life easier for them, it also enhances the value of your existing applications because users have all they need within your EMR, billing system, ERP and other applications.

## Step 5: Send it where it needs to go

You've identified unstructured content, captured it, safely stored it and integrated it with your core systems. Now what? With ECM, you can turn the tables on content that once created frustration and impeded efficient processes. Instead, you can use it to help people work more efficiently.

Using electronic workflows, an ECM solution can direct content to the appropriate staff based on rules you define. For example, in HIM, coders and analysts receive electronic charts on the basis of encounter type, complexity, facility or any other criteria suited to that department. In accounting and finance, invoices route to the appropriate approval channels based on amount or invoice type. In each case, departmental managers ensure an even distribution of workload among staff. Users can also work more efficiently within predictable parameters. As a result, those processes run more smoothly and efficiently, with staff more productive and content.

## Conclusion

Unstructured content, regardless of its form, leads to user frustration. And it makes sense. Any time staff has difficulty finding what they need to work effectively, frustration is a natural consequence. ECM technology can help you reverse that tendency, turning a source of annoyance into a point of efficiency. That, in turn, leads to happy users – users who understand the value of the systems and services your IT department delivers and supports.

To learn more about how ECM technology can help your organization, visit [Hyland.com/Healthcare](http://Hyland.com/Healthcare).

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