

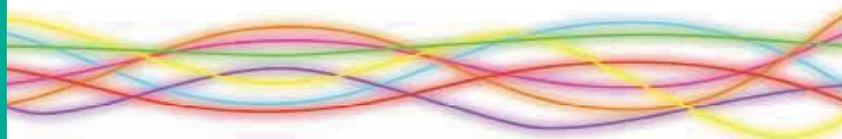
The need to increase patient focus in the NHS

A 2e2 Opinion Piece

The NHS is constantly faced with administering and meeting the emerging challenges created by the 21st Century Environment. Clinicians are being increasingly challenged; the increasing population and budget constraints created by the economic climate means they now have more responsibilities and greater workloads, with less money. The inevitable side effect of stretching resources is that it diminishes patient service and reduces clinical face time. In January this year David Cameron stated that *"nurses must improve patient face time ... systematically and routinely checking that each of their patients is comfortable, properly fed and hydrated."* It is not only Nurses that suffer from this problem, presently a variety of NHS staff are being forced beyond the domain of their job specification. NHS staff are becoming increasingly tangled up with paperwork and administration, draining time and resources, which prevents the desired standard of service. However, the employment of the latest technology, designed to meet 21st century challenges, can rectify weaknesses in current medical administration systems, allowing for better patient care. Investing in technology has been proven to alleviate the strain on resources, free up employee time and reduce costs.

The Push for Change

QIPP is a national programme designed to transform the NHS; the programme targets NHS staff, clinicians, patients and the voluntary sector. It is designed to improve the quality of care the NHS delivers whilst reducing costs. The project works within the NHS guidelines of reducing costs by £20billion, through efficiency savings by 2015. QIPP is based on a four pillar approach Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention. Investing in new technology and innovation enables more possibilities and greater patient care whilst reducing overheads. Unified Communications (telephony, video, email and contact centre), Mobile Networking (remote capabilities) and Cloud technology can make individual processes more efficient, reduce travel costs and make excess infrastructure obsolete. The magnitude of the medical sector has driven investment into research in these areas. This, coupled with government intervention is promoting the adoption of technology and reinventing current approaches to healthcare. NHS Trusts now must invest in the software to manage within the strict financial limitations created by the harsh economic climate.



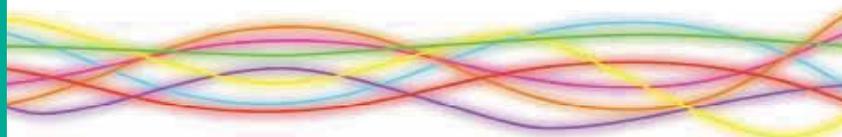
A New Way of Operating

Increasing face time with patients is something that (hopefully) every doctor wishes for, however, in order to achieve this we must expand beyond the conventional model of working. Unified Communications can provide the answer by making individual processes more efficient and improving the capabilities of doctors and their accessibility to patients. New telecommunications software enables greater and faster communication and collaboration between colleagues and patients including SMS reminders, electronic patient communications and video conferencing. The use of video conferencing facilities and an electronic information portal to manage patient records can enable doctors to improve the standard and quality of patient care and increase clinical face time.

Video conferencing facilities have a variety of benefits and with developments in software it is now inexpensive, secure and readily available. The software enables doctors to have face to face appointments with patients from their office, whilst the patient remains in the comfort of their own home or at another clinical location. This not only makes savings in travel costs and travel time for both patient and doctor; but also allows doctors to share information with colleagues, with some software also enabling visual access to medical records, x-rays and other relevant imagery without the need to meet in person.

Medicine on the Move?

It seems compulsory now in business that when an employee leaves the office, they should have their work phone glued to their side in case of an emergency. However, by comparison the medical sector has seen relatively minimal uptake of mobile technology keeping within the boundaries of common practice. It is somewhat peculiar for the medical industry, which is intrinsically linked with emergency, to have seemingly neglected these capabilities. Despite modern developments in smart phone technology and remote email access, there has been fairly minimal utilisation of mobile technology. This can be partly attributed to several blockades, including severe security requirements, no central data storage facility and most importantly a lack of demand from the private and public sector. This lack of demand could be a result of technology failing to justify expenditure. However, in recent years there has been a noticeable shift in attitudes with several corporations such as Microsoft, Cisco and O2 now looking to seize the untapped



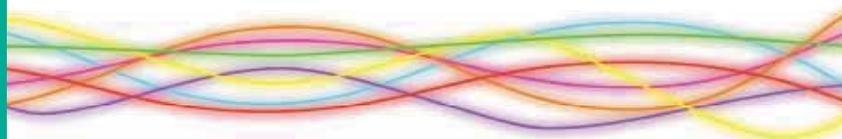
medical market. The surge of investment has overseen vast developments that rectify weaknesses in previous technology. New technology and infrastructure offer far greater possibilities and most importantly include cost saving and returns to compensate and validate an investment.

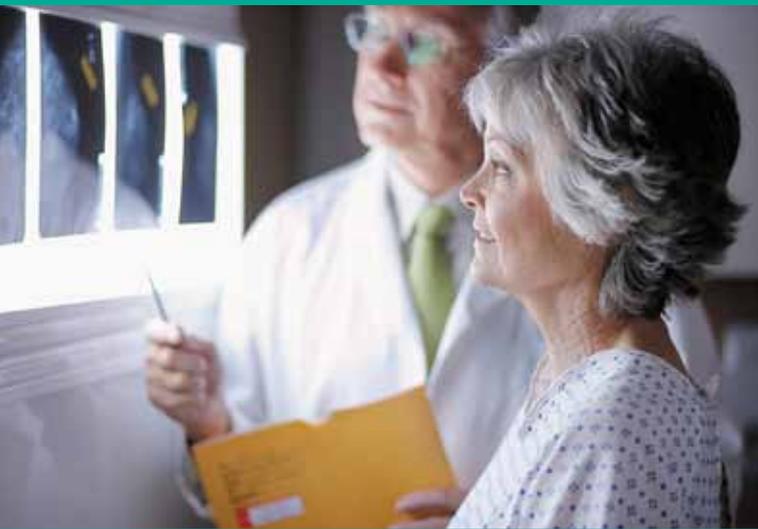
New mobile networking software enables doctors to securely access their files on the move or at home. This enables greater productivity which extends the amount of time available with their patients. Furthermore, having secure access to sensitive information and patient records on the move means that doctor and community teams can work remotely, at home or visit patients, with almost the full resources of their office.

Cloud for the NHS?

Gartner believe that data storage is currently IT's greatest challenge. 47% of respondents to a 2011 survey put data storage in their top 3 priorities and 62% of said they would expand data centre capacity by the end of 2011. Cloud Technology is shaping the way data is now being stored and aggrandising office capabilities. Cloud software enables applications to be delivered via the internet or a private, secure network. Applications can be accessed from web browsers, desktops and mobile apps; while the business software and data are stored in data centres at a remote location. The benefits of a secure, highly accessible and agile storage could alone validate the implementation of Cloud Technology. Using Cloud Technology to share ICT services across multiple organisations is an efficient way of managing small and large data levels with the agility and scalability to meet any NHS Trusts demands. Furthermore, Cloud services bring the real possibility of sharing patient information easily and securely across all care organisations, which allows for a more comprehensive care pathway to be developed.

Sharing services means that old ICT assets can be decommissioned and the offsite data centre allows for data to be accessed quickly and securely from even the remotest locations. Justifying the investment is simplified by the foreseeable reductions in costs through tailored storage services, asset decommissioning and increased efficiency; all of which reduces environmental emissions.





Getting Back to Medicine – Outsourcing Your Technical Problems

The NHS is not alone when it comes to managing technical difficulties, many businesses have been held back by ICT problems inhibiting production. In a bid to change this, many companies are now seeking external assistance to alleviate them from dealing with technical issues, allowing employees to get back to business. The Health sector is no exception and by utilising specialised managed services, it means that doctors, nurses and other NHS employees can focus on the task at hand, rather than dealing with technical issues. Outsourcing to an external specialist means that the Trust will benefit from greater experience, knowledge and economies of scale. Highly available, flexible and scalable solutions enable any trust to access external managed services. External solutions often work out far cheaper than in house providers; it can be inefficient for small trusts to house an internal team and better resourced specialists can achieve more efficient results.

Improving End User Adoption

Investing in software can create concerns for decision makers and investors can be put off by a previous investment in software, which may have failed to harvest the end user benefits that they desired. Training can be the pivotal difference in the success of an application. Businesses that purchase technology often make the mistake of trying to save money by cutting back on product training. Implementing training enables end users to utilise the full value of an investment. Outsourcing training to an external ICT provider enables the Trust to benefit from product and infrastructure specialists, who can effectively augment staff in understanding the full capacity of software. Comparatively, stretching in house staff capabilities can limit the end user adoption, which can be cost ineffective and inhibit the benefits of an investment.

Looking Forward

The QIPP programme is now mandating that Trusts must improve their patient service whilst reducing costs. Investing in anything at this time of economic uncertainty creates nerves and tension; any investment must be validated and will be highly scrutinised. Fortunately, the software in this article, not only fulfil, but surpass both criteria. Upgrading your ICT landscape enables greater possibilities whilst reducing costs with the main corollary of improving patient service. Ultimately, the key to investing is acting fast, technology unfortunately is not free, but by buying early, it enables quicker efficiency gains and benefits realisation, which in turn lead to a faster return on Investment.

Contact 2e2 for more information:

- a.** The Mansion House
Benham Valence
Speen
Newbury
Berks RG20 8LU
- t.** +44 (0) 1635 568000
- e.** info@2e2.com
- w.** www.2e2.com