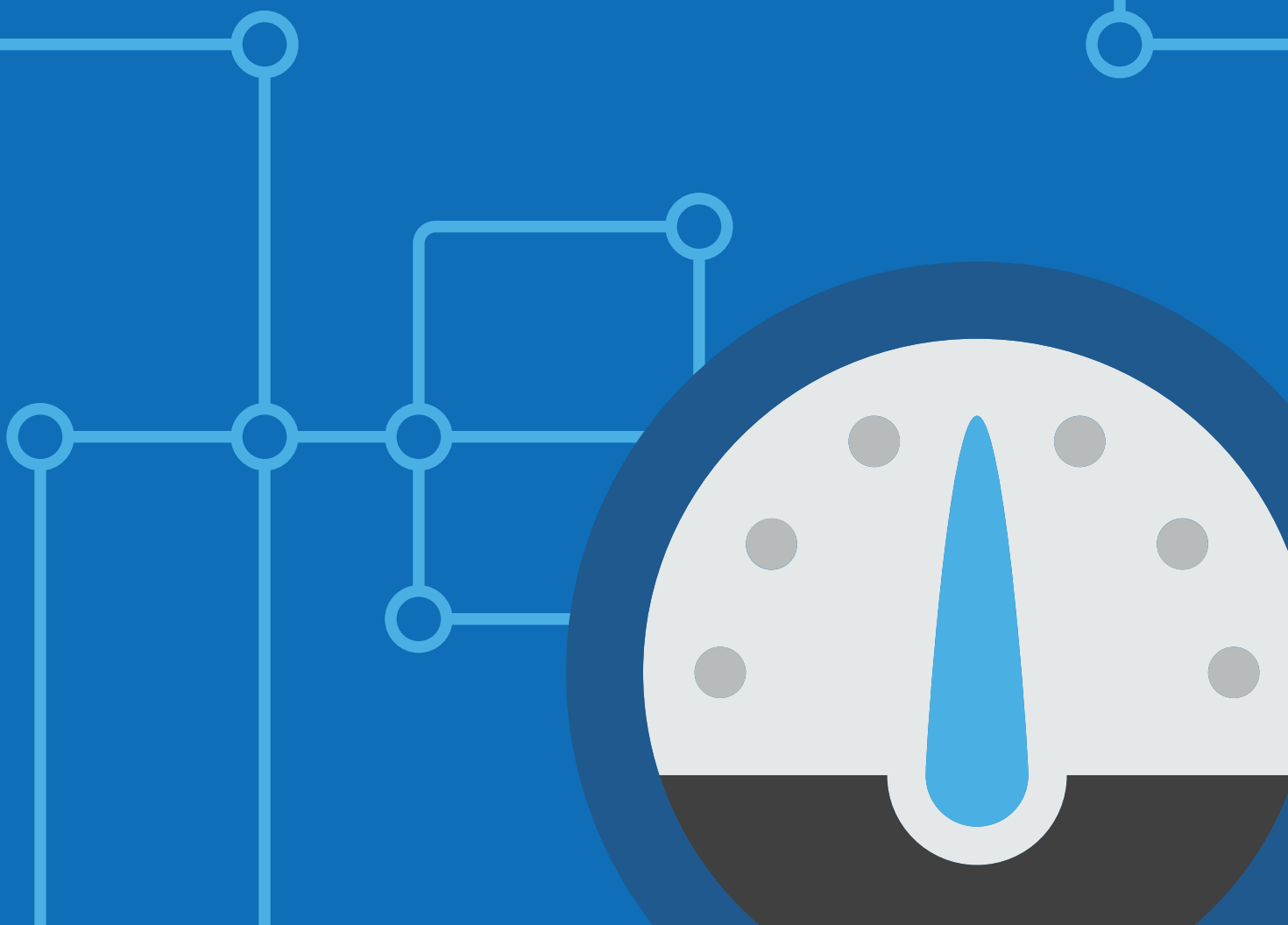




7 TIPS

FOR FASTER EHR INTEGRATION



INTRODUCTION

There's no doubt about it; the adoption rates of electronic health records (EHRs) among healthcare providers have skyrocketed in recent years.

For EHRs to realize their full potential, they must be able to share information with other information systems. Without integration, EHRs will only add to the very administrative burden that they are intended to reduce.

The reality is that for many healthcare providers and software vendors alike, integrating with EHRs (or EMRs as they are often called) is all too often an expensive and long-drawn-out undertaking.

The good news is it doesn't have to be.

Consider these 7 surefire tips to help make your EHR integration faster than it's ever been before!

1

Understand the actual workflow.

Before you think of grappling with the technical constraints of your EHR or consider how you're going to map your data, it's critical to understand the actual workflow being used. Take the time to observe the front-line users in action: watch the information flow, identify the gaps in the process and listen to their feedback. Once you understand what you're trying to integrate, how you integrate it will be much easier and faster.

2

Get the specifications upfront.

As obvious as this one sounds, specifications are often overlooked. Get your specifications and technical implementations details up-front from your EHR vendors. When accurate, the specifications will act as a set of requirements for your interfaces, saving you from using a costly trial and error methodology.

3

Avoid customizations on the EHR end.

As much as possible, you should work with what is already offered by your EHR vendor. All of the necessary transformations, translations and validation should be performed within your

integration solution, such as an integration engine. Not only will this eliminate lengthy delays caused by waiting on your vendor, it ultimately keeps the control and flexibility in your hands.

NOTE: Always perform the simplest translations possible. The risk of inaccurate or even lost information is greatly reduced if you keep the translation in the same language.

4

Standardize and normalize your data.

When you standardize and normalize your data, it becomes much easier (and faster) to maintain your existing interfaces as well as bring new interfaces online. For example, if you have a large number of incoming feeds that need to go into your EHR, consider mapping them to a normalized structure first and then create a single standardized interface to your EHR. This setup ensures that any improvements or changes made to the EHR connection are realized across all incoming feeds rather than having to apply the changes to each stand-alone interface. A well-thought-out data structure will pay dividends as the number of interfaces that you must maintain grows.

5

Use real data for testing and mapping.

There is simply no substitute for working with the real data coming from or required by your EHR. Your interfaces need to be as close to flawless as possible, especially when dealing with sensitive patient information. So, rather than attempting to recreate your production environment by generating simulated test messages, use the best test messages possible: real-world message. Your interfaces will be more stable and your testing times will be cut down significantly as a result.

6

Embrace the power of scripting.

Sooner or later (likely sooner), you're going to encounter a task that can't be performed directly within a graphical user interface (GUI). Unless your interfaces are free from transformations,

translation and complex business logic, then scripting is in your future regardless of what integration solution you use. Interface developers will tell you that up to 90% of all interfaces require some coding.

A proper scripting environment not only gives you the tight control you need to build robust, reliable interfaces, it also gives you clear visibility into all of your transactions into and out of your EHR, greatly simplifying and speeding up troubleshooting.

7

Focus on the data, not the system or format.

Integration is not about any particular information system or specific data format. It's about orders, results and clinical summaries. It's about getting actionable data into the hands of decision-makers regardless of HL7 version or type of web service used. Forget about debating the merits of one standard vs. another and just work with whatever data you have access to. It may sound obvious but when forgotten, it often leads to one-off costly and difficult to maintain interfaces.

Is your EHR integration taking too long and costing too much?

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