



# Winning the EHR Replacement Game: Success Strategies for Better Satisfaction





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# Introduction

**Should you replace your Electronic Health Record system?  
How do you make the right choice and get the best results?  
Asking – and answering – those questions may be easier  
than you think.**

After all, there are several tell-tale signs that your EHR may not be working for you. Is your staff using the EHR effectively? Is the pain of your system a frequent topic in your office? Is your relationship with your vendor strong? Do you believe your vendor can keep up with the changing health information technology landscape, and keep you in the loop? Is your system obsolete because it is no longer compliant?

If you have serious doubts about any of these points, a change in EHR may be a key point of consideration.

**The benefits of successful EHR use are numerous: Better practice outcomes; better revenue-cycle management; better securement of meaningful use incentive dollars (and avoidance of payer penalties); and of course, better patient data and outcomes.**

Achieving all those benchmarks takes the right EHR, implemented in the right way, and backed by the right vendor. Being able to check all those boxes off your list requires that you know the right questions to ask, and the important first steps after you sign a new contract. Read on to learn how you can create successful outcomes by replacing your EHR in the right way.



# Do I really need to replace my current EHR?

**It's a daunting question that clouds the day-to-day activities for many providers as they struggle with systems that may be outdated or just much harder to use than anticipated.**

There are many factors influencing the level of dissatisfaction with EHR systems in use today. Points of frustration include poor system design; workflow mismatch and excessive data entry; insufficient information exchange between systems; concerns about face-to-face patient care; and impact on financial viability for practices. Add to the list vendor concerns, from support services to vendor stability as vendor consolidation threats loom large. Some of the most robust systems suffer some of the worst user ratings. This may be because all of the requirements for the systems have created an information overload for providers.

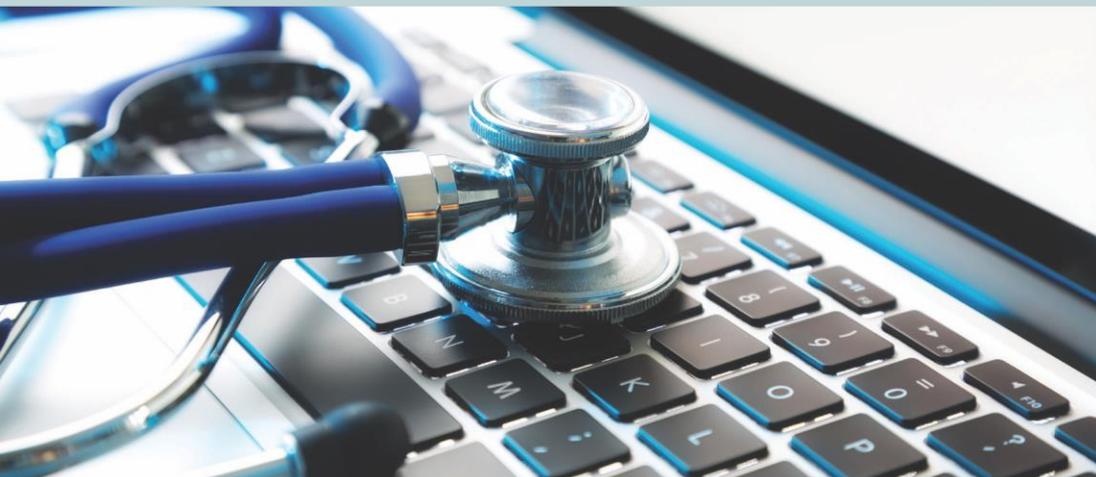
So, what is a frustrated doctor to do? It may be time to replace your system with a product and vendor that is a better fit for you. Undoubtedly, today's system purchasers are more sophisticated buyers of Health IT products. Drill deeper when contemplating replacement. Are you settling for your old EHR because you are used to it? A recent study by AmericanEHR Partners, in conjunction with the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians and the American Academy of Family Physicians, found that in 2014, 51 percent of clinicians reported they would not recommend their EHR to a colleague.

If you fall within that majority, here are some key questions you need to ask:

## **Am I satisfied with my relationship with my current vendor?**

Your vendor should be responsive and offer support, but they should also assist with system usage, staff education and future needs. They should communicate freely, especially concerning their ability to stay ahead – and keep you ahead – of the curve on changing health information technology requirements. If they are not talking to you about what's coming down the road, they may not be prepared to deal with it themselves.





### **Is my current system usable and easy to navigate?**

Your EHR should be easy to understand and navigate and feature an interface that is visually agreeable. It should not harm productivity or create extra steps in your workday. The system should adhere to rather than hinder your workflow. It should not force your staff to create workarounds. An EHR that your staff is not using efficiently is not the best EHR for your practice.

### **Is my vendor in it for the long haul?**

The EHR industry is filled with companies trying to profit from the expanding health information technology requirements. Ideally, your vendor would be rooted with a history that shows it can adapt and keep pace with an ever-shifting landscape. Can they prove they've been around and can stay around? Industry experts have speculated that as many as half of the existing EHR vendors will go out of business by 2017.

### **Will my new EHR save me money in the long run?**

In short, it absolutely can. Newer products often offer a more transparent cost structure that may be easier to understand, and actually less expensive than existing systems. While incurring the cost of implementing a new system may create a pain point for your business, the money that an efficient and effective EHR can recoup in staff-hours, productivity and meaningful use incentives can offset the initial investment.

### **Is my current system up to date with new requirements?**

There are newer, more robust, more user-friendly systems available than the outdated EHRs many practices struggle with today. The investment in moving to a more modern product is beneficial for many of these practices, especially when weighed against the risks of using a non-compliant system. Remember that interoperability plays an important role in your Health IT strategy. The cost of connections should be an important consideration in evaluating options.



# How do I start the search for a replacement?

Just like a trip to the grocery store, a good idea is to go in with a list. After all, you want to make sure you get what you want – and need – without loading down your cart with unnecessary items.

Begin by making a list of the essential features in your current system.

**“Know what you love in the system you have,” says Gary Hobbs, president of Kansas-based EHR vendor MDsuite. “If you are going to choose a new system, look for those features first in any product you consider purchasing.”**

Of course you should also make a list of features you would like, but don't have in your existing EHR. Can your new vendor cover these wants and needs?

One key thing to remember is that not all systems will have every feature included in your current set-up. With this in mind, consider your top pain points and frustrations with your existing system. Find out if the new EHR will resolve these issues. You can use the shopping list scorecard to keep track. This puts you ahead of the vendors and requires them to answer your questions, rather than providing answers to questions that may not be important to you. Even better, a good vendor will have answers to questions you may not have considered.



# What will happen to my old data?

**Many physicians have already encountered the pain of moving from paper charts to electronic records. You don't want to incur even more pain when migrating your data from an old EHR to your new system.**

You want to select a vendor that can make the transition as painless as possible for your practice. Do they offer a full-data conversion, including clinical data? Do they understand how the formatting of your data relates to ease of conversion?

In the end, you have to know how much of an emphasis your new vendor places on data conversion. After all, the practice of leaving data behind, or working with two systems, can be harmful financially, according to Dr. Robert Pierce, a Missouri family physician and chief medical officer at PDS/MDsuite.

“Moving data to a new system pays off when the investment is weighed against on-going operational costs of referencing old data through alternate sources,” Pierce said. “The price of conversion would be worth the investment to my practice.”

The decision to move data to a new system requires commitment from your team and your new vendor to determine the right data to move and be sure that an accurate conversion to the new product is achieved. To accomplish this, sampling and verification processes should be determined and agreed to before a new contract is signed.

# How will I learn my new system?

**Ineffective or insufficient training or support during conversion, implementation or go-live may have put you behind the eight-ball from the beginning.**

If your vendor did not take great care during any of these steps, that's a red flag. Seek out a vendor who is committed as much to the process as they are to the product. You should have a consistent point of contact to actively take you through configuration, conversion, implementation and training. A passive project manager on the vendor side may just be checking boxes. Having an active participant walking through the process with you insures that your contact is invested in your success. Then, take it a step further and insist that person field initial support calls and work with you through the follow-up and optimization stages.

And don't forget about go-live. Consider a vendor who advocates for a multi-day, in-person go-live process. In fact, studies show that providers and vendors who invest in on-site implementation with a minimum of three days of on-site training at go-live significantly increase user satisfaction. Your practice is busy and it won't take a break to let you work out the kinks in your new EHR. Taking time to make phone calls or set up remote conferences with an off-site trainer cuts into productivity, so it is easy to step away from those sessions. Such inefficient training can lead to lower adoption levels, which can cost you money in the long run. Remember the follow up, too. EHR systems have many features, and you will have more opportunities to optimize use of the chosen product. Plan to have your trainer come back to help you optimize. Then, take advantage of upgrade training, and user conferences provided by your chosen vendor. It is naïve to think that learning would be anything other than continuous as the product changes to meet evolving requirements.

Be committed to the training process and choose a vendor that invests in your success. Taking the time to properly set up your system and train your staff on the front end pays big dividends in adoption and user satisfaction on the back end.



## What's next?

If you are concerned about one or more of the questions covered here, you need to consider a vendor who puts customer satisfaction at the top of its list.





For more than 40 years, MDsuite (you might know us as PDS) has been an integral part of the healthcare technology landscape. As a leader in the delivery of medical software supporting more than 7,000 providers nationwide, MDsuite is an award-winning provider of advanced practice management and electronic health record software. Most important to you, we understand that you want to provide the best care to your patients and use software to help communicate and educate them. You need software that helps you be efficient and meet compliance requirements so that you can protect the revenue that allows you to provide that great patient care.

MDsuite's solutions enable enhanced provider relations, improved patient care, and better financial outcomes for enterprise organizations and practices nationally. An easy electronic health record and robust practice management solution, coupled with long term committed employees, ensures that our clients enjoy a complete, extended software solution with unparalleled support.

Contact MDsuite to see if their focus on data conversion, compliance, implementation and single-source point of contact is the right fit for your practice.

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