

Improving Patient Care by Transforming & Automating Hospital Processes

Forms Don't Have To Be Paper: 5 Simple Steps to Paperless Automation of Clinical and Business Processes

Leaders in healthcare delivery are juggling a constantly changing regulatory environment with delivering quality patient care. Government requirements and regulations are always looming, costs are increasing and quality of patient care is top of mind.

Responding to the current ARRA and HITECH financial incentives means focusing attention on electronic healthcare technology to improve patient care while reducing costs. While important, clinical-focused investments are leaving day-to-day operational issues unaddressed. And, patients are still signing paper HIPAA and Medicare notices on paper!

Even with a new EMR, hospitals will still have slow processes, bottlenecks and stacks of paper. When moving from legacy systems to next generation systems, certain paper-based processes can still remain. For instance:

- An implementation decision for a new supply chain system may only focus on high volume purchases, leaving special purchase requests behind.
- New clinical systems may ignore the physician credentialing and suspension process, forcing HIM to continue manually tracking physician status.
- The ever-present consent form remains manual and can result in patient care delays.

Opportunities to streamline and eliminate paper-based processes exist throughout most organizations –you simply need to find the stacks of paper and uncover the process delays.

During a December 2010 HIMSS-sponsored webinar, “Taking the Paper Out of the Process: A Successful Approach to Process Automation,” Bottomline Technologies surveyed over 400 healthcare providers on the paper-based processes which remain in their organizations.

CLINICAL PROCESSES:

Over 80% of hospitals surveyed indicated that documents requiring patient signatures remain paper-based.

BUSINESS PROCESSES:

Purchase requests (46%) and vacation requests (51%) dominated the non-clinical paper-based processes.

5 Simple Steps to Remove Hidden Paper When Implementing HIT System Changes

The trend of moving from paper to electronic is increasing within healthcare. Going paperless can be accomplished and delivers on the mandates to:

- Get rid of bottlenecks
- Streamline processes
- Eliminate paper

The following five steps will show you how to improve patient experience by getting rid of paper and inefficient processes.

Step One: Find the Paper!

If your organization still has a number of paper-based processes, the first step toward paperless process automation is to identify all the places where a piece of paper drives the process. Look at processes that might be partially automated, with some paper remaining or situations where two automated processes are joined by a paper-based link. For example, you may find paper at the registration desk or in your human resources processes, such as vacation requests. Having created a list of the paper-based processes, categorize them based on frequency of use, length of delay, data entry error rate, cost, risk of change or delaying change, impact on employee/patient satisfaction, fit with organization objectives, or even departmental willingness to change. A categorization that is meaningful to your organization will help focus efforts to reduce the dependency on paper-based processes.

Step Two: Identify the Potential Projects

Identify the top three to five potential projects to undertake, and then determine the expected return on investment (ROI), either from direct cost elimination, mitigation of risk to patient care or efficiency improvement. Projecting the expected costs and savings allows the organization to later measure the outcome of undertaking the paperless process automation initiative. The following chart identifies a list of costs and savings to consider when prioritizing the project.

Potential Cost Considerations	Potential Savings
Process Automation Technology	Tangible Costs
Monthly Services Fees	Paper
Initial Software License	Labor (Data Entry, Paper Stocking, other)
Annual Software Maintenance	Re-work
Hardware (Server eSignature Device, other)	Lost Savings/Discounts
Initial Project Implementation	Fines due to Time Delay
Project Team Time Allocation	Mitigation of RISK
End User Rollout Training	Patient Care
Ongoing Process Improvement Refinements	Intangible Costs
Time to Document Results	Consistency/Quality
Time to Define Additional Process Improvement	Improved Satisfaction
	Time Delay
	Accuracy of Forecasting Work Completion
	Difficulty Providing Accurate Status

Step Three: Prepare for Change

No matter which paper-based process is targeted for automation, careful consideration needs to be given to acceptance of, and readiness for, organizational change. Executive sponsorship is critical to help address organizational issues with resistance to change. Project team members can also help prepare co-workers for moving from the current process to the new process by providing an understanding of why the change is being made and how the new paperless process will benefit users, patients or the organization as whole. Communicating early, and often, a “why change” and “why change now” message can go a long way toward increasing organization acceptance. Sharing information regarding the expected results and the plan to track and show the results can also be effective for cross organizational buy-in.

Step Four: Select the Right Technology

When selecting a technology for paperless process automation, each organization must consider how well the technology will meet your organization’s needs. Key selection criteria should include:

- Flexibility to handle both simple and complex processes
- Ability to interface with multiple systems including EMR, using HL7, data lookup, or even print stream output
- Visibility into process status and completion metrics
- Ability to enforce deadlines and issue threshold-based alerts and escalations
- Ability to enable collaboration during process completion

Step Five: Implement the Technology

Documenting and understanding each process before implementation will help uncover exceptions that need to be addressed with new paperless processes. Doing this will help hospitals avoid falling into the “just do it” mode of implementation. Conduct multiple reviews with the impacted users during the development of the solution to confirm that the business needs are met. After implementing the new process, don’t skip the step of comparing the expected return on investment to the actual results. This review may also help identify further refinements to implement.

Bottomline Technologies Intelligent Forms Solution: Inprotica®

Inprotica, an interactive workflow automation platform, was created to help automate the paper-based processes left behind when automating other workflows. Inprotica helps organizations design workflow, enable data interaction, create automated forms, manage approval processes and to do it quickly. Whether your organization needs to electronically capture patient signatures at registration or the point of care, or simply to automate and track office supplies requests, Bottomline can help. See below for an overview of the solution.

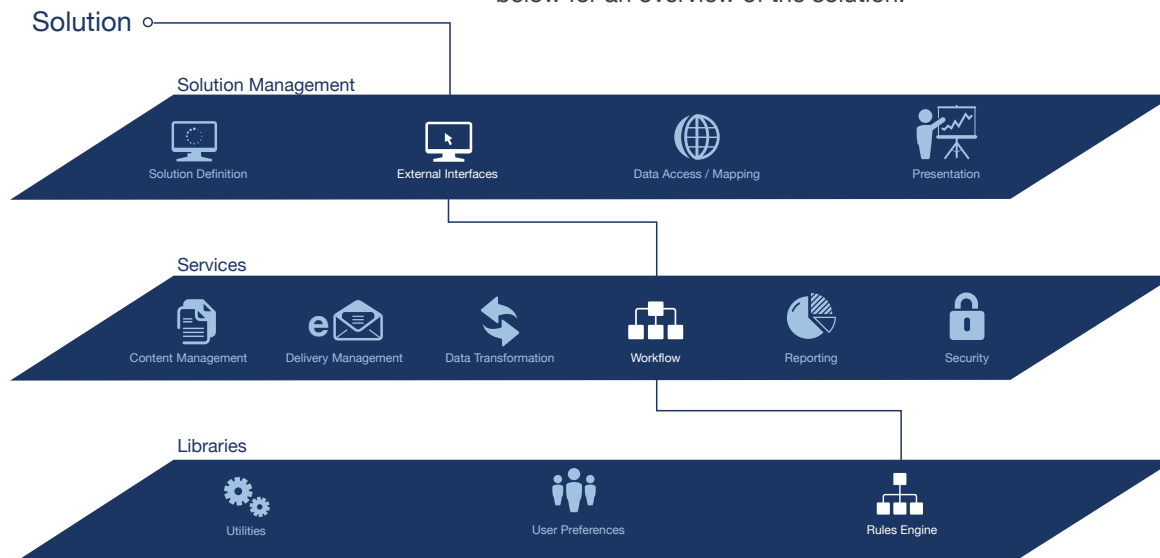
Bottomline’s Inprotica® workflow solution can help simplify and remove the paper from:

CLINICAL PROCESSES

- Consent & Registration
- Any other clinical data process

BUSINESS PROCESSES

- Claim Audits (RAC)
- Special Requests
- Any other business process



For more information on how Inprotica can allow your organization to take the final steps in truly becoming a paperless organization, email Inprotica@bottomline.com to speak with an account representative.

About the Author

Becky Capps, Director Healthcare Strategy for Bottomline Technologies, has over 10 years of experience in the healthcare IT industry. Her experience includes implementing paperless process automation and improvement initiatives, ranging from healthcare revenue cycle to business operations. Becky can be reached at bcapps@bottomline.com.

Additional Resources

Bottomline on Healthcare Newsletter

Bottomline experts offer their thoughts on paperless processing at: http://www.bottomline.com/healthcare_solutions/bt_on_hc/fall_2010.html

Forms Automation ROI Calculator

To learn how your facility can achieve rapid ROI with forms automation, visit: www.bottomline.com/healthcare

Calculate the Environmental Savings

To help raise further awareness of the environmental benefits achieved by transitioning from paper to electronic processing, Bottomline has posted a green savings calculator on its website at: www.bottomline.com/gogreen



About Bottomline Technologies

Bottomline Technologies (NASDAQ: EPAY) provides collaborative payment, invoice and document automation solutions to corporations, financial institutions and banks around the world. The company's solutions are used to streamline, automate and manage processes involving payments, invoicing, global cash management, supply chain finance and transactional documents. Organizations trust these solutions to meet their needs for cost reduction, competitive differentiation and optimization of working capital. Headquartered in the United States, Bottomline also maintains offices in Europe and Asia-Pacific. For more information, visit www.bottomline.com.