

Change: It's about time

Benjamin Franklin once said, “Lost time is never found again,” alluding to the fact that time is a scarce resource and, should it be wasted, can never be recovered. This is truer than ever as pressures and demands both in and out of work make time a precious commodity. And time is not just important for tasks and activities – time also plays an important role in people’s mental wellbeing, reducing pressure, allowing space to gather oneself, and reset.

Stepping into the busy, challenging world of a modern hospital or clinic, the need for time is never more apparent. With the patient at the centre of everything that happens, speed is often critical, but many time-orientated factors become barriers to that core focus. Technology has often been seen as a panacea for efficiency, or time saving in plain English, and in many places delivers on that promise. However, when placed into the unique melting pot of healthcare, it has created situations where time is unnecessarily lost.

Measuring change

Technology has revolutionised the modern world and is now part of the fabric of society; what began as a steady creep of technological advancements has now become a landslide, accelerating rapidly as a result of necessity. Within healthcare, that change should be viewed in terms of how it helps deliver for the patient, what benefits it brings either directly to the care of the patient or indirectly to the people who are caring for the patient. With that in mind, the need to measure the effectiveness of change is paramount.

What has become increasingly apparent is that how we measure change has not moved forward at the same rate as the change we have implemented. Is it now time to move to a new paradigm and prioritise the measurement of change when considering the value of technology? How do we measure such change? If our goal with technology is to drive efficiency, make tasks easier, and reduce wasted cycles, then let us use a common currency. Time.

Why is time so critical in healthcare?

Time is valuable in healthcare: time influences value, how people are able to provide care, and the kind of care that a patient receives. A clinician will ask themselves whether a particular task, process, system, or requirement contributes to their ability to address the needs of the patient, whether it helps them get better? Or will more informed, more timely decisions and actions save or improve a patient’s outcome? If the answer is no, then it is less likely that said task, process, system, or requirement will be used or followed.

Consider the most time-sensitive and pressurised environment in a hospital, the Accident & Emergency Department (A&E): can a doctor or nurse afford to waste any time unnecessarily when a patient in a critical condition arrives? Also consider how vital it is to have a complete picture of the patient, any pre-existing conditions they may have and how a deeper, fuller knowledge of the patient may help guide – and possibly even improve – the decision-making process. There is almost a contradiction in those two statements, the need to take time to understand a level of detail, but not to waste time in finding it.

Therefore, every second, minute, hour wasted on tasks that do not contribute to patient care should be analysed and addressed but also in the context of ensuring that clinicians have the fullest picture possible, the greatest number of tools and information to deliver the best possible outcomes for the patient.

As healthcare organisations consider change, it should be framed around the critical nature of healthcare and the benefit it brings to the delivery of care and to quantify that benefit you need to measure time. The more time you can give back to clinicians, the less wasted cycles on unnecessary tasks and the more time that can be devoted to patient care and positive outcomes, allowing the clinician to focus on the needs of the patient.

Life on the front line

Understanding what life is like at the front line is key to ensuring that digital change brings value. Not only on the wards and clinical areas of the hospital, but in the back-office areas with the IT team as well. Making decisions about where to invest time, money, and resources should be made with an understanding not of the perceived challenge or problem, but on the observed behaviours, actions, and frustrations that are impacting patient care.

When was the last time you walked a mile in your clinician user's shoes, observed their interaction with digital technology as they went about their clinical tasks? Whilst users may vocalise their perceived problem, the root cause creating this may not be understood. Only by observing the action they take can you reach that root cause. The same also applies to the IT team: listening to and watching their interactions with users can provide insight into the challenges that are acting as barriers to the delivery of care.

This insight should act as a fundamental building block of where decisions are made in regard to investment, in both resources and financial.

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside his skin and walk around in it.”

- Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

IT, the hero in a multi-disciplinary team

How do you effectively quantify the behaviours of clinicians and their interactions with technology? It is about time, and specifically about time spent out of patient-centric focus, either direct or indirect. The introduction of technology has placed more data, information, and insight at our fingertips, but also created pathways to get at that digital data that are potentially less intuitive and increasingly ring fenced by more barriers than ever, driven by regulation, legislation, and security needs. Clinicians are therefore faced with a challenge: the benefits that technology brings to care, but at the expense of time spent on activity where they are out of focus. Therefore, measuring the time spent is key to unlocking the success of digital technology, driving its adoption with clinicians, and, most crucially, of ensuring the highest quality of patient care.

Being able to give time back to a clinician will make you a hero: you'll be putting time back in their hands to invest in core activity rather than superfluous tasks, recovering lost time.

Benefit of time

Reducing the length of time to access IT systems is not just about installing new desktops, upgrading Windows, rolling out a new application, and resetting passwords, although all of that is important. It's about matching technology with clinician workflows. It's about making the technology so intuitive to the end user that it is almost invisible. It's about giving time back to clinicians to realise patient-centric value.

Here are some examples of the benefits achieved when technology is matched to maximise clinical workflows, and clinical end users are engaged in the process.

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust – No Click Access to 60 clinical applications



“In 12 months, we have been able to deliver a single sign-on solution across the entire Trust. Over 4,500 staff are now using single sign-on every day and the Trust has plans in place to get to its full staff capacity of 18,000 by the end of the year. For those delivering care this has been a leap in both clinical safety and efficiency that, in their words, they ‘dreamed of.’”

Richard Corbridge, CIO, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust is a regional centre for a range of specialist services including cancer, neurosurgery, heart surgery, and liver and kidney transplantation. It is one of the largest Trusts in the country, employing over 17,000 staff across six main sites and treating over 1.6 million people each year.

After a successful pilot in the renal unit, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust has deployed single sign on, authentication management, and mobile device management across the Trust. The solution is providing No Click Access® to 60 clinical applications in regular use, streamlining the process and positively impacting productivity. In addition, the Trust has implemented password self-service management, allowing users to easily reset their own passwords, or be notified of their network and application passwords without delays or IT service desk intervention.

With faster access to real-time data, clinicians can focus on patient care instead of grappling with technology. For instance, clinical workflow studies undertaken at inpatient wards at Leeds showed that with Imprivata OneSign®, individual clinicians have been able to reduce the time used to access clinical data by over 60%. In real terms, for a clinician, the amount of time spent accessing IT systems has been reduced from 52 minutes to 20 minutes per shift while also adopting secure individual login practices to computer workstations.

North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust NHS – Fast access in A&E

“Imprivata makes my life a lot easier by managing multiple logins. It is a big step forward on information governance in a busy department with large throughput and multi-device working.”

R D Southward, Consultant of Emergency Medicine, Consultant of Sport & Exercise Medicine, North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust



North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust is an integrated hospital and community services healthcare organisation serving around 400,000 people in Hartlepool, Stockton, and parts of County Durham.

Clinicians at the Trust in A&E, the Rapid Access Clinics, and the Emergency Assessment Unit can now access NHS Spine applications and see the summary care records for each patient. NHS Spine allows information to be shared securely through national services such as the Electronic Prescription Service, Patient Summary Care Records, and the e-Referral Service. As a result, the Trust has seen improved efficiency, security, and data governance.

Staff now only have to remember one password to access 21 applications, can focus on patient care, and can utilise essential clinical applications quickly, while workflows have been designed to complement daily activities. Users access the NHS systems with their own smart cards, providing accurate audit logs and ensuring that diagnostic tests and prescribed medications are attributed to the correct clinician.

The impact of cognitive disruption – from frequent distractions and interruptions or repetitive complex workflows – demands new approaches and strategies to be devised.

Time saved, benefits realised

Having worked hard to save time with faster technology and streamlined workflows, it is important to consider where that recovered time will be invested, how it will benefit clinicians and the care of patients.

More focus on patients

An obvious benefit of time back is the ability to spend that time on patient care and not with technology. When something “just works” and doesn't introduce distractions, it is more likely to be used at or close to the point-of-care. And when considering things from the patient perspective, the doctor or nurse is more focused on them than on a computer, application, or connected device, and therefore the possible frustrations in using the technology. More focus means less anxiety for the patient during a potentially traumatic time.

Risk mitigation

One should also consider risk, or, more specifically, a continual process of risk analysis and mitigation to inform safety and improve standards of care. External influences that can cloud clinician decision-making are increasingly being understood and accepted. The impact of cognitive disruption – from frequent distractions and interruptions or repetitive complex workflows – demands new approaches and strategies to be devised. Distraction from the care of the patient should absolutely be considered a risk and, therefore, reducing or removing tasks that divert focus should be a priority as part of mitigation strategies. The goal is to ensure there is less distraction for the clinician allowing focus on quality patient care.

Taking five!

With the increasing pressure being placed on our healthcare system by an ageing population, staff numbers, and, most recently, the unprecedented impact of a global pandemic, the wellbeing of healthcare staff should also be included when considering the impact of time-consuming tasks. Staff burnout is a growing problem and is almost always related to time, or more specifically, the lack of time. Whether the freeing up time is used by a clinician to “take five” and gather themselves, to catch up on admin tasks that would otherwise eat into personal time, or just reduce the need to spend time on frustrating tasks that are perceived to be unnecessary and can potentially compound people's frustration and irritation in challenging and stressful situations can go a long way in preventing burnout.

It may seem like these are very negative ways at looking at the benefits of giving back time, but the real driver here is to empower clinicians to do what they do best: deliver high quality patient care in the best possible way, and create the right environment for that to happen.

Time for Imprivata

The problems and challenges above are the ones that Imprivata solutions seek to address. It may not be at first apparent, but many of the challenges faced by clinicians in a modern healthcare environment relate to their digital identity. The core functionality of the many digital systems present in a hospital or healthcare setting is straightforward: a record within an EMR, a connected vital signs monitor, or a mobile device; the barriers that require time and focus to overcome are more often than not, related to the security wrapped around these devices. Security in this context is identity, ensuring that the clinicians are who they say they are, have permissions to access systems or records, and are able to do so from designated or permitted locations both in and out of the hospital.

Create bottlenecks around access to systems – around identity – and you create a barrier and, therefore, wasted time. These are the problems that Imprivata solves, recognising the importance of time, and addressing the challenges with identity and the need to balance security with ease of use.

Taking a clinical lead

Our approach is driven by a clinical team that is at the heart of Imprivata, ensuring that patient care is placed at the centre of all projects and that customers are closely worked and partnered with to realise the benefit that Imprivata solutions bring. This is certainly not the de facto approach across the industry where solutions, often perceived as necessary as part of a digital transformation strategy, are forced upon clinicians and into existing workflows with little consideration for their impact, positive or negative.

Clinicians are notoriously resistant to change where there are no perceived benefits, and rightly so. This inevitably leads to poor adoption of solutions and projects that never get off the ground or deliver the promised benefits.

The Imprivata approach is different because it's about time. Understanding the current experience, and what challenges and barriers clinicians are facing is key to this. Imprivata clinicians spend time with organisations to understand the landscape prior to deployment, measuring time spent on different activities by clinicians. Building this detailed picture prior to undertaking a project helps illustrate where the greatest frustrations are being felt and where maximum benefits can be had.

Working closely with both the IT team and clinicians and joining the two camps together to mutually understand each other's perspective and support change is the secret to a successful project.

A range of services to empower your implementation

Imprivata provides a range of consultative services to ensure that each project generates maximum benefit to the organisation, clinicians, and patients. To do this, Imprivata clinical workflow specialists work with multi-disciplinary teams to ensure end user engagement.

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About Imprivata

Imprivata, the digital identity company for healthcare, provides identity, authentication, and access management solutions that are purpose-built to solve healthcare's unique workflow, security, and compliance challenges.

For further information please contact us at

+44 (0)208 744 6500
or visit us online at
www.imprivata.co.uk

Offices in

Lexington, MA USA
Uxbridge, UK
Melbourne, Australia
Nuremberg, Germany
The Hague, Netherlands

Imprivata provides a range of services designed to lay the foundations for a successful implementation. These include:

- **Clinical Workflow Analysis**

A benefits realisation study conducted in partnership between the healthcare organisation and the clinical and technical expertise available from Imprivata. The analytical process is divided into two parts, spread across a pre-determined time period – typically around six months.

- **Remote Clinical Solution Assessment**

The Remote Clinical Solution Assessment provides healthcare organisations with dedicated remote clinical professional services to drive the clinical value of a prospective project. It provides an opportunity to obtain clinical insights into the capability of the proposed solution or technology, and to start localising value, i.e. evaluating how each individual department will get the most benefit.

The effect is to start maximising value from technology investments and driving adoption with clinical users, from the inception of a project.

Understanding the clinical workflow of healthcare providers and organisations not only empowers the clinicians and optimises adoption of new technologies, but also facilitates improvements in patient experience and outcomes. In this rapidly changing digital world, with all of the benefits it brings to healthcare, surely that's the goal. After all, it's about time.

If you are interested in maximising value from technology investments and driving adoption with clinical users, from the inception of a project, Imprivata is here to help. We would like to invite you to a briefing session where we can outline in more detail how Imprivata can help you to give more time back to clinicians and discuss how Imprivata clinical services can support your organisation. To schedule a session with our team, please contact your Imprivata representative:

Neil Falcini, Regional Sales Manager, UK (South, Wales and NI) and Ireland
nfalcini@imprivata.com

Vanessa Wilkinson, Regional Sales Manager, UK (Midlands & North) and Scotland
vwilkinson@imprivata.com