



# Five ways to improve the healthcare user experience

## Why managing unstructured content makes life easier for end users

Unstructured content – the information that resides outside of your organization’s core systems and processes – plagues nearly every healthcare organization. For patient care, it has been estimated that up to 75 percent of patient information – in paper or electronic form – exists outside of your EMR. In patient finance, it’s the data stored outside of your billing and financial systems. And in accounting, it lives beyond the reach of your ERP system.

But why is unstructured information an issue, and how can effectively managing it improve the end user experience? By its very nature, unstructured content annoys clinicians and staff. They have to find it. They have to wait for it. They have to worry about whether it’s been lost or misplaced. Put simply, unstructured information impedes their ability to do their jobs effectively.

With just five steps you can manage this content to make life easier for the people who rely on your IT systems to help them do their jobs.

### Step 1: Identify it

Before you think of ways to better manage your unstructured content, you first need to understand what it is. For each organization, this content can be a different assortment of documents and information across all departments.

For example, in care delivery, unstructured content can be everything from faxed orders and diagnostic images to the actual paper chart. In accounting departments, invoices and the information surrounding specific financial transactions often exist as unstructured content. Paper EOBs and EDI transactions similarly hamper processes in patient financial services.

The key to understanding the nature of the unstructured content facing each department is to talk to the people who work there. Only then will you truly be able to get it under control.

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### Step 2: Get it out of the way

Odds are pretty good that paper and other physical content like faxes, EKGs, photocopies and patient charts are in someone's way. Sifting through a stack of faxes for one piece of paper creates frustration. It reduces the time spent caring for patients, submitting bills, paying invoices, onboarding employees, etc. It also increases the likelihood that another piece of information may be lost or misfiled. Even if your organization's paper content is safely stored in a central filing location, storage costs money and the space might be better allocated to patient care.

This is where enterprise content management (ECM) can help. An ECM solution captures the diverse range of information and content within your organization – the paper, faxes, diagnostic and digital images, insurance cards, patient IDs and more. By capturing that content, you eliminate the need for its physical storage and management. You also reduce frustrations of staff who no longer have to navigate a sea of paper to find what they need. And, improving productivity while saving on storage and filing costs demonstrates a true return on investment sure to please the more financially minded in your organization.

### Step 3: Put it somewhere safe

Capturing that unstructured content is only the beginning. You also need somewhere to put it. An ideal ECM solution provides you with a single, secure repository to store your unstructured content electronically, reducing complexity in your IT environment by eliminating disparate, disconnected content silos.

Unstructured information also poses a security risk. An ECM solution securely stores this content, minimizing the risk of a HIPAA violation. Additionally, ECM systems that provide audit trails make complying with The Joint Commission, Sarbanes Oxley and other initiatives much simpler. Making life easier for users and constituents demonstrates the true value of your department and its portfolio of solutions.

### Step 4: Make it easy to find

For this content to be useful, the people who need it should be able to find it easily and quickly. Integrated with your organization's core applications, an ECM solution provides instant access to content from within those systems, often with a simple click of the mouse.

For clinicians, that means finding information once stored in paper charts within the EMR. For those in patient financial services, it means finding transactional billing data within the billing system instead of on an EOB or isolated EDI transaction. And for those in finance and accounting, it means finding an invoice within the ERP system.

Ideally, users of a well-integrated ECM solution might not even know they are in a different system. They simply find what they need within the applications they know and use every day. Not only does this make life easier for them, it also extends the value of your existing applications because users have all they need right from within your EMR, billing system, ERP and other applications.

### Step 5: Send it where it needs to go

You've identified unstructured content, captured it, safely stored it and integrated it with your core systems. Now what? Turn the tables on the content that once created frustration and impeded efficient processes and use it to help people work more efficiently.

Using electronic workflows, an ECM solution directs content to the appropriate staff based on rules you define. For example, in HIM, coders and analysts receive electronic charts on the basis of encounter type, complexity, facility or any other criteria suited to that department. In accounting and finance, invoices automatically route to the appropriate approval channels based on amount or invoice type. In each case, departmental managers ensure an even distribution of workload among staff. Users also work more efficiently within predictable parameters. As a result, those processes run more smoothly and efficiently and staff are happier and more productive.

### Conclusion

Unstructured content, regardless of its form, leads to user frustration. It makes sense, really. Any time staff has difficulty finding what they need to work effectively, frustration is a natural consequence. But, ECM technology turns that source of annoyance into a point of efficiency. This creates happier end users who, in turn, understand the value of the systems and services your IT department delivers and supports.

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