

# The questions you should ask about your EHR/EMR

## 1 EXPENSE

### Is the reality of the true cost of an EMR sinking in now that systems are live?



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For years, healthcare organizations have been in search of the pot of gold on the other side of the technology-implementation rainbow. The good news is that many healthcare organizations are realizing improved quality of care, greater operational efficiencies and better financial performance.

But they are not on easy street ... yet. In fact, many healthcare leaders continue to struggle with a sense of buyers' remorse, fearing that their EMRs will result in a financial drain and they will not be able to allocate resources to other initiatives. They are also confronted with unending "sticker shock" as they watch EMR implementation and maintenance costs rise.

As a result, healthcare leaders must keep a watchful eye on the ongoing and rising costs associated with EMRs. But that doesn't mean leaders should shift into complete penny-pincher mode. Instead, they need to strategically allocate resources, both financial and human, to get the most out of their EMRs. That means spending money when needed and pulling back on the purse strings when warranted. It is time to re-engage tactical and strategic IT planning with emphasis on projects that bring the greatest value to the organization.

To start, leaders should make sure they are actually allocating the dollars required to optimize the clinical, workflow and financial benefits associated with their EMRs. For example, it's important to go beyond "cursory" clinical adoption and really get physicians, nurses and others to use all the functions of a system. As such, investing in the internal or external resources required to put robust computerized physician order entry initiatives in place is likely to be a good use of money. When physicians become fully engaged, EMRs are much more likely to produce those all-important clinical benefits that lead to improved patient outcomes.

At the same time, leaders need to know when to pull back on the spending as well. For example, software vendors continually introduce upgrade after upgrade. For each of these instances, leaders need to discern if the new functionality – and all of the coordination and testing required to implement it – will actually be worth the investment. The ability to assess the technology and truly determine if it will result in additional worthwhile benefits is key and leaders need to hone this ability now more than ever before.