

Change on *Too Fast of Track?*

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The question is, “Are we in danger of changing too fast.” Are we pushing change so fast that we are forgetting the people and focusing on the technology?

Technology affects every aspect of business today. I’m currently involved with moving into a new facility and closing an old facility. This is fantastic, and has proceeded on schedule, but the organization decided to go live with our electronic health record on the same day we will move in to the new facility.

You may say this is doable, but consider we are making all these changes as the same time:

- New hospital
- New equipment
- Training
- Electronic health record
- Compliance with new licensure and regulations

Thinking of how this will impact my department brought about the realization that the technology that we are using to improve customer

satisfaction and improve revenues is also about to replace people...all at a tremendously fast pace.

In my area of imaging services, the new and faster technology, voice recognition for fast reports, replaces transcriptionist. In addition, the fast digital imaging equipment reduces the number of technologists needed to perform exams.

There should not be a fear of improving the ability to treat patients or assist the physicians with their needs; but if all this pre-programmed, built-in technology continues to grow, how soon before even management is no longer needed?

Where technology is going to affect the method, the equipment, and the operation so much in imaging, there are difficult decisions to be made. Such innovations should not be avoided in order to retain jobs for current workers, the direction taken should include a vision of where the organization is going and planning on how fast it’s going to get there. A strong belief that the staff can be educated into new methods of work will ease the change from old to new.

Be sure to ask these questions:

Do we need change? So validating change then becomes an issue. Technology is continuously evolving and we cannot stop it. No longer do we have to wait years for changes - they are occurring daily.

Should we be so technology driven? Can, or should, every aspect of health care acquire the latest affordable technology? Each change requires new medical, technical, and support staff; and the human resource cost is a significant side of the technology investment.

Be sure to also ask these “W” questions:

- What will it cost?
- What do we hope to achieve?
- What are the risks, constraints, and barriers?
- Who wants the change? Why?
- Who will benefit?
- Who will be affected adversely?
- Who will resist?
- Who will support the change?

In an April 1997 article in *Imaging Economics*, Dr. Thomas R. Prince addresses the values of technology. He states “Investments in medical technology for both personnel

(professional staff, physicians) and equipment are a prerequisite for delivering high-quality, low-cost care in the marketplace. The consumer product life cycle of the major equipment should serve as the time frame for this strategic analysis.”

One cannot predict the changes in health care, we can only try and anticipate the changes. Developing

one’s ability to adapt to change, to learning new technologies, will most likely keep our people in a position of not being replaced but being retrained, refocused and actually seeking more change. It’s only difficult when it happens all at once.

Douglas Cathon has spent more than thirty years in administrative healthcare roles. He has lectured

at national conferences regarding administrative responsibilities and has published dozens of articles in various journals, Cathon is the Director of Imaging at 2 hospitals in northern California. His philosophy is that no matter how great the technology, the success we seek only comes to us through strong work ethics and how those are reflected back by those who work with us not for us.

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