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Practice Management Software

5 Reasons to Consider Whether Your Hospital is Ready for the Cloud

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INTRODUCTION

As we are all aware, cloud computing is here to stay. While more businesses take advantage of Software as a Service (SaaS) by accessing applications via the internet, they no longer have to maintain or upgrade software and hardware. Cloud computing can provide enormous costs savings while opening up a whole new shared infrastructure accessible from anywhere.

There are multiple reasons why this type of functionality is so enticing. There is no need for a server or IT staff, and you can access information from virtually any type of device. But is it the best solution for your clinic?

1. DON'T JUST "CLOUD". MAKE SURE IT'S THE RIGHT FIT.

As noted in the article 5 Features to Look for in Veterinary Practice Management Software there are a number of reasons why a new software platform may make sense for your clinic. You may desire to integrate a new piece of equipment or increase your control over inventory. Or you may want a system that makes it easier for you rid yourself of more paper. With whatever practice management system you choose, make sure it has the functionality you are looking for.

There are some benefits of cloud computing like eliminating traditional IT needs such as a server. However, that shouldn't be the only reason to select one system over another. Make sure your new system meets your needs.

2. MAKE SURE YOUR NEW CLOUD PMS TALKS TO YOUR CURRENT EQUIPMENT

Most cloud systems struggle with bi-directional integration between in-house equipment like your SOUND digital x-Ray or the Abaxis lab machine. Without integration between your practice software and your practice equipment you are left with an incomplete medical record. So as part of your research in selecting a system that is the right fit, you'll want to consider what you already have in place.

3. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE INTERNET BANDWIDTH YOU WILL NEED

Just because you can access the internet from all of your workstations in the clinic don't assume you have the connectivity you'll need for cloud computing. Remember that your practice software drives your entire clinic so you should assume that all departments will access the information simultaneously. In addition, you may want to access your information from devices not currently connected to your network, like tablet computers. Be aware that your monthly internet service fees will increase as you move up from standard DSL speeds. Some IT experts suggest that for a standard sized clinic (7 access points and 12-15 users) you will want bandwidth coverage of at least 50mbps "up" speed and 10mbps "down" speed, and higher speeds if you are planning on connecting in-house equipment like labs and digital x-Ray. Without at least this much you will most likely experience a slow Internet. And slow Internet can translate into slow access to information and poor customer support.

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4. DON'T ASSUME YOUR INFORMATION IS PROTECTED

There are many cloud storage companies we use and are familiar with. Just because the software you want is cloud based doesn't mean that it's automatically stored in a safe environment. Look for companies that will house and store your data in separate locations.

You will also want to keep watch on who has access to your data. Employees can come and go. You'll want to make sure that the software you select has security measures in place that controls not only who has access, but what software functionality they have access to as well.

The same can be said for the cloud PMS you select as well. The cloud makes it easy for the software company to log on and offer support. Can they also log on, pull data, and sell it? Look closely at the contracts you sign. If you don't want them to be able to use your data other than for support, make sure you get it in writing.

5. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE "LIFE TIME" COSTS OF THE CLOUD

Most cloud applications come with small, monthly fees, but cloud usage fees are limitless and will last as long as you use the service. Factor in the additional costs of maintaining internet bandwidth to handle cloud usage and you could be looking at thousands of dollars each year, for the life of the system without every owning anything but your information. What happens to your data if you decide you want to leave the cloud PMS to move to another system? In a traditional PMS, your data is controlled by you and resides on your server. With the cloud you never truly own your data. If you need to migrate to another system you may incur high data export fees or find out it is not possible from the vendor.

LEARN MORE ABOUT VIA'S PRACTICE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

While there are a few reasons why a cloud system may be right for your clinic, there are a lot of reasons you may not be thinking about, which might make it wrong for your hospital. A smart network coupled with a highly functional, integrated software such as VIA provides you with all of the accessibility you'd like from virtually anywhere in the world, yet without the worries of security, slow access speed, or long-term costs.

VIA was designed to help veterinarians save time, improve patient care, and go paperless – all of which translate into higher profits. In addition to helping you produce SOAP Notes and Electronic Medical Records, VIA comes with advanced features including payment processing, inventory management, flowsheets, time clock and more.