

**CASE STUDY:**

# Overcoming the Challenges of Simultaneously Optimizing and Supporting Your EHR

Saint Luke's Health System (SLHS) provides a range of inpatient, outpatient, and home careservices. Saint Luke's IT department faced a common challenge—how to simultaneously support and optimize its new electronic medical record (EHR) system without adding headcount or increasing costs.

**OVERVIEW:**

SLHS and HCTec implemented a strategy to ease the stress of EHR system maintenance and user support. This unique approach categorizes tasks by purpose and streamlines task production to decrease distractions for staff. By ensuring employees are focused on tasks suited to their skills and expertise, internal IT staff can have higher production rates with less reliance on outside consultants. This strategy has led to a dramatic turnaround in employee retention, productivity, and cost savings:

**CHALLENGE:**

When SLHS began implementing a new EHR and Revenue Cycle Management System (Epic) across its organization, it triggered an immediate increase in the resources necessary to support it. The unexpected and disparate tasks caused distractions and inefficiency, which led to heightened employee dissatisfaction and an increase in staff turnover. The struggles within the IT department impacted the hospital's physicians and clinicians, causing unhappy end users and patients. It became clear that a new approach was needed.

**CHIME COLLABORATION AWARD WINNER**

 **Saint Luke's**  
HEALTH SYSTEM



Kansas City Area  
10 Hospitals



500 Physicians  
60 Specialties

Working together, HCTec and SLHS developed a strategy to meaningfully increase overall productivity and employee satisfaction, reduce employee turnover and save a projected \$20 million.

New employee resources could be hired, but highly specialized skillsets often can be difficult to find in smaller geographic markets. Even if additional employees were hired, the average required time to get a new full-time employee to an acceptable level of productivity is six months, with an approximate cost of **\$170,000 per new employee**. These costs were unsustainable, especially when the department was already experiencing a **15% employee turnover rate**. More consultants could be hired or the entire operation could be outsourced. Yet with fees as high as \$175 per hour per resource, another solution had to be identified.

#### SOLUTION:

SLHS and HCTec analyzed each task IT staff members were required to complete. Tasks were then sorted into two categories:

- General Operations tasks involve running the business and maintaining the EHR system.
- Growth and Business Transformation tasks focus on optimization, development, and strategic projects.

Using these categories, SLHS and HCTec established an operations strategy that created two workforce teams:

- Team 1 is focused on general operations, with HCTec's Managed Services team acting as an extension of Saint Luke's IT department by providing 24-hour Tier I and II support.
- Team 2 focused on growth and development, with the support Team 1 provides freeing the internal IT staff members in Team 2 to focus on strategic planning and EHR optimization.



By redefining task production, full-time staff can now concentrate on similar assessments, which will be completed faster and more efficiently, without distractions. The two teams solve a problem that one team could not have accomplished without the other.

#### COST SAVINGS

The total cost savings projected to be realized within the five-year engagement is estimated at \$20 million.

**23%  
INCREASE**  
PROJECT  
HOURS

**25%  
REDUCTION**  
OPERATING  
EXPENSES

**97%  
INCREASE**  
CUSTOMER  
SATISFACTION

**80%  
REDUCTION**  
EMPLOYEE  
TURNOVER

#### RESULTS:

With HCTec's Managed Services team, SLHS's employee time is being used more effectively. Employees were spending approximately 32% of their time solving break/fix issues. Now, **only 15% of their time was focused on break/fix resolutions, leaving the remaining time for production tasks**. Additionally, the percentage of time devoted to maintenance and errors has decreased by almost half, dropping from 17% to 9%. In parallel, the percentage of time employees committed to **new development increased more than threefold to 38%**. With the increase in employee satisfaction, end users are highly satisfied and turnover has dramatically reduced.

*"Delegating the daily management and associated support tasks of our EHR has enabled Saint Luke's IT team to become agile, flexible and efficient."*  
Debbie Gash, CIO, Saint Luke's Health System