



Practical Project Management

Consultant People, LP

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Project management for Community Hospitals
Part II
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Executive Summary

The life of a CIO in a community hospital can be very stressful. Being all things related to computers to all people is a lot to ask of any one person but it is what is expected in this position. So how can the CIO make the job manageable and still have a life outside of work? Finding ways to share responsibility is part of the answer.

Business Challenge

A key facet of the CIO's' role is to inject technology into any and all processes in the hospital that can benefit from its use. Generally, the CIO makes the case for using a particular solution, seeks funding, and takes responsibility for the implementation project. For most community hospitals these projects are piling up as more people demand technology to solve a problem, save money, reduce errors, or make their jobs easier. As a result, priorities have to be set. In this environment, sharing the decision making on priorities is critical in reducing the stress level of the CIO.

The Solution

A solution is to involve the senior decision makers in the hospital in the prioritizing process. Laying out all the projects with estimates of time and resources and asking each of the senior leaders to participate in prioritizing is an excellent way to share the responsibility and backlash should someone's pet project be given a low priority. If the hospital has an IT committee with senior leadership involvement, then this technique can be used here as well. The key is to give senior level decision makers information so that they can make an informed decision and share the responsibility. It also can help them appreciate the work being done in the IT department. An important factor is to set appropriate expectations early on to be sure they are aware of how much time each new system will require in on-going support from the IT department.

Present the Key Priorities to Decision Makers

Illustration 1 is a form that can be used periodically, ideally once a quarter, to collect and present the priorities of key decision makers. To use it the CIO would list the proposed, active and completed projects for the year. For each project enter the estimate of labor hours to complete, estimate of weekly support hours for the new system, and current status. Be sure to differentiate the status of a project that is in maintenance mode from ones that are complete. This will help you show the growth of support

requirements as new systems are added to the inventory.

Be sure to enter the primary skill resource needed to work on the project in order to compare commitments against availability. Once priorities are established, this will help you see if resource conflicts will need to be addressed. The form can then be sent to each decision maker with a summary explanation of each project attached along with instructions for filling out the form.

Illustration 1



CPeople Hospital


Proposed 2006 Projects	Estimated Labor Hours to Complete	New Support Hours per Week	Project Skill Resource	Current Status	Prioritization Score 1 - 5 (1 = High Priority)					
					CEO	COO	CNO	CMO	CFO	Average
Project 1										
Project 2										
Project 3										

Model Example

Illustration 2 is an example of the form completed in the summary format. Scores have been entered on each project omitting the two that are complete or live. The scores have been averaged and the projects sorted in order of average priority. In this example the scores vary considerably. This reinforces the need for senior decision makers to discuss these priorities and reach a consensus. It also should be noted that two existing projects received low priority scores. This suggests that either the leaders don't understand those projects or have some doubts about their value.

In the example the CIO has highlighted the estimated support hours for each system to draw attention to the mounting support requirements during the presentation. Also highlighted is the Analyst resource which may be a constraint limiting the ability to take on some of these new projects.

Illustration 2



CPeople Hospital

Proposed 2006 Projects	Estimated Labor Hours to Complete	New Support Hours per Week	Project Skill Resource	Current Status	Prioritization Score 1 – 5 (1 = High Priority)					
					CEO	COO	CNO	CMO	CFO	Average
MEDITECH 5.6 Upgrade Testing	500	0	Analysts	Not Started	2	2	3	3	1	2.2
Implement MEDTECH EDM	800	8	Clin Analyst	Planning	2	2	1	2	4	2.2
MEDITECH Document Scanning	800	8	Analyst	Planning	3	3	3	1	2	2.4
Implement PACS	750	40	PACS Admin	Not Started	1	2	4	1	4	2.4
Electronic Results Interface to XYZ Clinic	200	2	Analyst	Not Started	1	3	5	1	3	2.6
Implement MEDITECH EMAR and BMV	800	8	Clin Analyst	Not Started	3	4	1	1	4	2.6
Rebuild Nursing Documentation	400	0	Clin Analyst	20% Done	4	4	1	2	3	2.8
Upgrade Email Servers	80	0	Analyst	50% Done	2	3	4	4	2	3
Redesign Hospital Web Page	200	0	WEB Program	Not Started	2	2	5	3	3	3
Network Upgrades	400	0	Tech Analyst	Complete						
Interface New Dispensing Machines	160	8	Analyst	Live						

Presenting the Summary

Presentation of this summary should be in a meeting format so that the results can be reviewed and questions about each person's responses addressed. This will provide an opportunity for negotiation and priority adjusting. It will also give the CIO the chance to draw attention to items such as resource constraints and the low priority of the two projects already started. Hopefully this will generate some discussion. The goal of this meeting is to achieve consensus, set direction, and appropriate expectations for the next period. The end result is shared decision making and reduced stress for the CIO.

Conclusion

The solution is to involve the senior decision makers in the hospital in the prioritizing process. The key is to give senior level decision makers information so that they can make an informed decision and share the responsibility. An important factor is to set appropriate expectations early on to be sure they are aware of how much time each new system will require in on-going support from the IT department.

More Information

The essential source for project management fundamentals is the Project Management Institutes (www.pmi.org) Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBOK).

The APMC WEB site www.allpm.com is a good location for articles on project management.

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