

Healthjump Helps Statewide Health System Migrate Away from Acquisition-Induced Data Chaos

By any measure, Virtua is a massively sized *and* massively successful healthcare organization. Virtua's network is comprised of multiple wellness centers, fitness centers, long-term care and rehabilitation centers, acute care hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, home health services, urgent care centers, and hundreds of primary and specialty physicians.

Through this vast network Virtua serves many thousands of New Jersey patients annually — including more than 8,000 babies delivered per year. And Virtua serves its many patients with great distinction. Virtua's leadership consistently promotes and maintains an organization-wide culture of quality care.

Recent external recognition of Virtua's incessant drive toward providing quality care for its patients include:

- The HealthGrade Patient Safety Excellence Award (top 10% in the nation for patient safety)
- The Press Ganey Guardian of Excellence Award for Patient Satisfaction (top 5% in the nation for patient satisfaction)
- The National Research Corporation Consumer Choice Award (based upon the largest online consumer healthcare survey in the U.S.)
- U.S. News & World Report ranking as Best Regional Hospital
- The Beacon Award of Excellence from the American Association of Critical Care Nurses

Virtua has also been recognized for excellence in cancer treatment, cardiac care, diabetes care, urgent care, emergency services, home care, and many other specialties. It's safe to say that Virtua could be considered a model for what a large healthcare system can and should be.

Growing Pains

Like many large healthcare systems these days, much of Virtua's growth has resulted from the acquisition of many smaller healthcare organizations.

Note: slide 5 in the PP might be a good graphic to include here

Each acquisition brings with it the need to access and incorporate the siloed repository of patient data within that organization, making the data accessible to the systems and personnel of the parent organization. Complications in transitioning this data are routine, and are frequently exacerbated by the proprietary, ad-hoc data management systems that are often in use in smaller organizations.

But it's also commonplace for concerns about data migration to take second seat during the acquisition process. The focus is typically placed upon completing the acquisition process and transitioning the acquired organization to a functioning component of the acquiring organization.

And that's what happened at Virtua; the data migration can was kicked down the road. But sooner or later, the can-kicking must come to end.

The Stuff of Nightmares

Maureen Owens, Director of Ambulatory Applications at Virtua, recognized when the data migration can had been kicked as far down the road as possible. That point was defined by another big event: an organization-wide migration to NextGen's Ambulatory EHR system.

There was plenty of financial incentive to make the jump. Decommissioning all of those different systems that had been acquired — along with the associated maintenance demands — and moving it all to NextGen would substantially slash ongoing operational costs. And there were compliance incentives, too. Virtually all aspects of maintaining compliance would be far simpler with a single organization-wide system. Even routine tasks such as creating a flu shot compliance report could be outlandishly difficult when data had to be pulled from lots of different systems.

But the job of migrating all of that data would be quite the project. And Maureen knew that the project would entail a little bit of everything, requiring a wide range of skills and expertise. Maureen's team had to figure out how to gain database access to a bunch of different systems. They also had to:

- Find a way to translate that data into a common format — codifying uncoded data in the process
- Assign MPIs
- Insert the data into NextGen
- Validate the data

“It was a management nightmare,” Maureen recalled. “With everybody on disparate systems, it was difficult to try to pull the data together in a streamlined way.”

A Dream Come True

Quite fortuitously, Maureen happened to attend a NextGen conference around the time that she was planning/strategizing the data migration. And she came across Healthjump's booth. After talking with the Healthjump people for a bit, she realized that they might offer a remedy for her data migration nightmare.

“When we met Healthjump, we realized that our big migration plan was actually doable. And that was just like a dream come true for me.”

Jim Rowland, CRO and one of Healthjump's founders, along with other members of the Healthjump team, paid a visit to Virtua. The Healthjump team explained to Virtua's CIO how they could help with the migration project. The CIO was sold.

“He was immediately confident after the meeting that we had the right folks for the job,” Maureen recalled.

Working Out the Problems (and the Weird Things)

The Healthjump team went to work alongside Maureen’s team. And, as would be expected for a project of this magnitude, there were plenty of problems to work through. Weird things, as Maureen put it.

At each step of the migration process, lots of testing was performed. The team would take a snapshot of data as it looked in the original acquired system, bring it into NextGen, and then perform an element-by-element comparison. They didn’t always see what they expected to see. “When we put it all together and moved it to production, we saw some really weird things that we didn’t expect,” Maureen said.

At every step it was essential to be on the lookout for serious problems. Consolidating multiple records into one — from a patient that had both primary care and cardiology records, as an example — might result in some of those “weird” things, like duplicated med prescriptions. And each time one of those problems cropped up, the team would have to refine the logic applied to that step of the migration.

When You’re Knee-Deep in Problems, You’d Better Have the Right Partner!

Problems are likely to be encountered during the course of any sizable migration project. For projects the size and scope of Virtua’s data migration, significant problems are a virtual certainty. That’s when the mettle of your team is tested. And that’s when you find out if you have the right partner.

As Maureen noted, once you begin a project like this, you’re in it knee deep. And you’d *better* have the right partner. Especially when you have to tell them about the weird things. Maureen recalled that she always had access to anyone she needed, from Jim on down

“With Healthjump, I was able to get on the phone with a developer or the project manager as soon as one of these problems occurred. ‘You’re not going to believe what we see,’ I’d tell them. And they’d say, ‘Oh jeez, yeah, we’ve got to fix that right away.’ No waiting for an SOW; no hoops to jump through; no arguments about the problem falling outside the scope of the project. Just show them the problem, and they’d fix the problem.”

Maureen certainly feels that she chose the right partner. She has since recommended Healthjump to other groups within her organization. And when it came time for her next big project, migrating from NextGen to Apex, she didn’t have to think twice about the partner she would choose — Healthjump helped Virtua also complete that massive project successfully.

But that’s another story...