

HOW-TO EBOOK

# 6 Insider Tips to Successfully Launching a Clinical Communications Solution





## While communication among healthcare delivery teams is slowly improving, it remains fragmented in ways that continue to impact the quality of patient care.

Navigating your way through a successful implementation of a clinical communication system doesn't happen by chance. It requires proper planning, the right resources, and a platform partner like TigerConnect who understands your specific needs. To help you move confidently through this process, we've put together this handy step-by-step guide that details the best practices you can follow to maximize value from your clinical communications investment.

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More importantly, these disparate clinical communication tools are not designed for fast-paced, data-driven clinical workflows with providers spread across multiple facilities. They lack cohesion and integration across a single platform, which leads to missed voicemails, pages, and text messages. The result is frequent clinical workflow interruptions and distractions as well as delayed care, patient dissatisfaction, and provider frustration. Inefficiencies increase costs due to wasted time, poorer outcomes, and potential harm.

That is why many hospitals and health systems are transitioning to an integrated clinical communication platform across their enterprise. Through advanced technology delivered via smartphones and workstations, physicians, nurses, and allied support staff can obtain real-time, reliable information more efficiently and effectively, and in a format that is synchronous with their workflow. A unified platform also offers access to critical patient data from the electronic health record (EHR) and other information systems to make care-team communication actionable, safe, and effective at the point of care.

Healthcare organizations, however, are usually large, complex institutions. Successfully implementing a clinical communication platform typically requires a six-step, enterprise-wide process explained in this eBook. Those steps are:



### STEP 1:

Form an interdisciplinary governance committee. Ensure all stakeholders can share input while helping move the project forward.



### STEP 2:

Establish specific outcomes for the organization. Drill down on overall goals prior to forming an implementation plan.



### STEP 3:

Align with clinical communication workflow best practices. Analyze existing workflows to find gaps and fragmentations and identify solutions.



### STEP 4:

Integrate systems and tools in the cloud. Leverage the cloud to minimize implementation time and connect with clinical systems of record.



### STEP 5:

Deploy to the full care team. Create real, lasting value for hospital clinicians and staff by enabling all parties to communicate on a unified platform.



### STEP 6:

Leverage real-time data to drive behavior and outcomes.

A clinical communication solution that focuses on efficiently delivering answers and information to providers when and where they need it will ultimately spread rapidly throughout the enterprise, benefiting the organization financially, while also improving patient experience and reducing provider burnout.





## STEP 1:

# Form an interdisciplinary governance committee

A successful implementation of a new clinical communication platform requires representatives from stakeholder groups to serve on a governance committee that establishes the project's goals, forms its strategy, and manages the execution.

These governance committee members and their duties may include:

- **An executive sponsor:** Often the chief information officer (CIO) drives strategic decisions and aligns the project with enterprise-wide objectives
- **A clinical leader:** A physician or nurse executive, often the chief medical information officer (CMIO) or chief nursing informatics officer (CNIO), offers strategy and input on clinical workflow configuration and communication challenges
- **A clinically focused business owner:** The director of clinical operations or a professional with a similar title makes tactical decisions and helps overcome roadblocks
- **Project manager:** An assigned project management professional who can coordinate project

details, report to the governance team, and communicate progress across different departments and disciplines

- **IT professional:** Involved in the early phases of the project to understand technical requirements and complete technical setup process

The importance of the clinical champion cannot be overstated. This representative can be a change catalyst and is essential to translate benefits of the clinical communication platform and to help overcome any resistance.

Throughout the governance committee formation and subsequent meetings, the clinical communication platform vendor should guide discussions and share best practices learned from other provider organizations to ensure meetings are productive and the desired ROI is achieved.



## STEP 2:

Determine desired  
outcomes and impact

Determining desired outcomes resulting from the new clinical communication solution typically begins before a governance committee is formed. However, once the stakeholders are in place, the committee should more clearly define the project's clinical and financial goals.

For example, a common goal among organizations is to increase patient throughput. There are numerous metrics an organization can associate with that goal, such as average length-of-stay (LOS). Once the committee has adopted that metric as a key performance indicator (KPI) of its patient throughput goal, it then needs to align clinical workflows and communication technology to support continuous improvement.

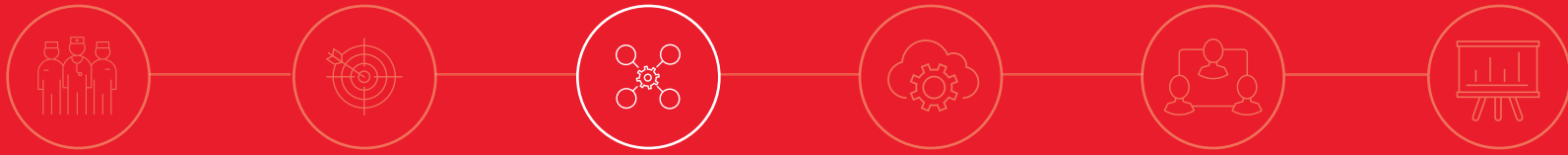
This is just one of many metrics that governance committees will use as a KPI, but it is important that this data is continually tracked and reviewed by stakeholders to ensure the organization is achieving its desired ROI. In subsequent governance committee meetings these metrics, as well as other key data captured from the clinical communication platform's analytics engine, need to be reviewed and discussed. Throughout goal setting, implementation, and daily operations, decisions need to be based on up-to-the-minute, reliable data.

In addition to establishing outcome-oriented KPIs such as a reduction in LOS, hospitals and health systems should also develop cohort and sub-cohort level KPIs for utilization of the communication platform.

By working with their platform vendor, organizations can obtain industry standard benchmarks for healthy activity levels, and use these benchmarks to drive governance. For example, data may show that a NICU nurse sends an average of 20 messages per day, initiates six new conversations, and makes four clinical data calls via the messaging application.

By establishing this benchmark and leveraging data analytics tools provided by the vendor, the project governance team can track performance at a granular level. Most importantly, this process of data-driven governance allows the team to take targeted intervention the moment an individual or department begins to fall short of the established benchmarks.





### STEP 3:

Align with clinical  
communication workflow  
best practices

Implementing best-practice clinical communication workflows does not mean eliminating processes that physicians and other clinicians prefer that help them work efficiently. Fear of losing productivity, as well as missing important messages, makes physicians and other providers reluctant to adopt new communication solutions.

Care teams may also be wary due to the disruption caused by EHR deployments years ago.

That is why any new process has to adopt best practices that have been proven to quickly and demonstrably eliminate pain points that caregivers have with communication. For example, organizations that want to reduce LOS need to consider associated processes that frustrate providers and patients, such as discharge.

The governance committee, in conjunction with the clinical communication platform vendor, need to map such processes and identify all the clinicians involved. A qualified and experienced vendor can then share best practices from other top-performing clients that can streamline the discharge process for faster bed turnover, more satisfied patients, and shorter LOS.

Another example could be on-call physicians who are frustrated because they cannot communicate by text message with entire care teams due to a lack of a consolidated platform or phone number access.

A unified, highly intuitive, mobile clinical communication platform that allows any user to look up providers based on their role, not their name or phone number, eliminates those frustrations. The vendor's technology should offer such capabilities, as well as schedule integration and other real-time electronic tools that do not rely on traditional, inefficient methods such as whiteboards or printed lists.



## STEP 4:

Integrate systems  
and tools in the cloud

Clinical communication platforms that most often earn widespread adoption and help the organization achieve its clinical objectives and ROI are usually integrated with essential systems providers use daily such as: EHR, nurse call, ADT, scheduling, lab, radiology, and others. These systems, along with secure text messaging and other tools, can deliver patient-specific, real-time information in an instantly accessible and actionable way.

The cloud is an ideal deployment environment for the clinical communication platform, and the integration into various systems. Other key technical infrastructure steps for the implementation should include:

- Identify and upload data on all users - with a focus on including the full care team.
- Ensure user sign-on and authentication process is secure, but seamless so clinicians are able to access needed data across numerous systems through the platform.
- Review Wi-Fi and other networking capabilities to maximize performance.

Setup desired integrations with clinical and other communication systems.

With a cloud-based systems implementation and integration, the infrastructure development process to go live should take less than a month, depending on any interface customizations the organization requests.





## STEP 5:

Deploy to the full  
care team. Don't make  
it optional

Effective and efficient clinical communication requires all affected team members to collaborate with as many of their colleagues as possible. If only 20 percent of the care team, for example, physicians, are using the platform, then communicating with nurses and allied health professionals requires them to use legacy fragmented communication methods.

To achieve lasting success, organizations must enable as many clinicians as possible to use the platform and strongly encourage usage among employed staff.

In many cases, a mandate is also used to ensure sustained adoption of the new workflow and technology. In order to realize the productivity gains and value of a communication solution, critical mass usage of the system must be achieved quickly.

A mandate, coupled with an effective communication, training, and deployment plan, is often the best way to do this. Some users may push back against mandates, making clinical champions critical in these instances to translate the benefits to colleagues. Consider a historical anecdote: when hospitals roll out a new EHR, is usage optional?

Piloting the clinical communication platform in certain departments before spreading enterprise wide can also be helpful in overcoming resistance to change. Early, documented improvements will almost always lead to adoption and rapid growth.





## STEP 6:

Leverage real-time  
data to drive behavior  
and outcomes

For long-term adoption and continuous improvement on initial KPIs, as well as those added later, data-driven usage analysis of the technology is crucial. The governance committee should be charged with establishing policies and procedures for studying usage and identifying optimization opportunities.

Questions to ask:

- How many messages are being generated? By whom?
- Which clinical care team populations are generating the most?
- Who is responding most often or the fastest?
- When and where are messages sent most/least often?
- Which departments and users are lagging behind?

Studying these metrics, as well as the clinical and financial KPIs that were established in Step 2, will help organizations understand and overcome adoption barriers and drive continued, more effective platform utilization and care team communication.

Moreover, data analysis will help identify any problem areas, allowing for quick intervention to remedy the situation.

For example, if the data shows that utilization is generally poor among emergency room users, the project team can quickly engage emergency room stakeholders to ascertain the root cause. In doing so, the team may discover that cellular data connectivity is poor in that part of the hospital, causing problems with the adoption of the messaging tool. The hospital can then take rapid steps to boost Wi-Fi coverage or set up emergency room users on a privileged Wi-Fi network.



A close-up photograph of a doctor in a white lab coat and a blue patterned tie. The doctor is holding a smartphone in their hands, with their fingers positioned as if they are typing or navigating the device. A stethoscope is visible around the doctor's neck. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a clinical setting with a computer monitor.

## CONCLUSION

A unified clinical communication platform designed to optimize efficiency and productivity is mandatory as healthcare delivery organizations face greater financial and patient care quality challenges in an unpredictable industry.

By following these six steps, organizations can rely on their new, efficient, data-driven clinical communication platform to deliver on their desired clinical and financial objectives for long-term success.



## About TigerConnect

As healthcare's largest provider of clinical communication solutions, TigerConnect helps physicians, nurses, and other staff communicate and collaborate more effectively, accelerating productivity, reducing costs, and improving patient outcomes. With 6,000 facilities, 99.99% uptime, and over 10 million messages processed each day, TigerConnect continually delivers advanced product innovations and integrates with critical hospital systems such as the EHR, nurse call, and scheduling solutions.

The company's commitment to client success is reflected in its broad support organization that works directly with clients at every stage to streamline communication workflows and achieve the highest possible ROI.

Learn how clients like RWJBarnabas, Geisinger, and LifePoint are using TigerConnect to solve healthcare's biggest communication challenges.

Website

[www.TigerConnect.com](http://www.TigerConnect.com)

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