tiger connect

Transforming Care Experiences

6 Must Ask Questions When Evaluating a Clinical Communication Solution

Introduction

Every stakeholder in the healthcare industry, from patients to staff and insurers, is placing new demands on healthcare organizations. Improve care. Cut costs. Reduce staff burnout. To achieve all these imperatives, investments in new technologies must do more than automate tasks. They must enable transformation.

Advanced clinical communication and collaboration (CC&C) solutions can dramatically curb costs and streamline clinical workflows. These newer platforms are far more robust than the text-based systems many providers may be familiar with. Platforms such as TigerConnect offer integrated scheduling, patient engagement, alarm management, event notification and the ability to interface with other hospital systems such electronic health records (EHR). For those evaluating these more advanced platforms, there are more criteria to understand versus texting only tools. How do you evaluate these newer technologies and the providers offering them?

This eBook highlights six areas to explore when considering clinical communication and collaboration solutions. Each aspect encompasses the capability of the technology, and the expertise of the provider.

1. ROI: **Does the solution significantly reduce costs and improve workflows? Can the provider demonstrate successful installations?**

Many solutions deliver some measure of value, but can that value be quantified against key operational metrics such as reduction in lengths of stay, improved reimbursements, and improved Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores? Solution providers should be able to document the success of their similarly situated customers to you.

ROI-centric case studies should outline in detail how the customer significantly improved operations and the explicit role the CC&C solution played. For instance, a TigerConnect customer reduced paging costs $55,000 a year by using clinical communication to unify workflows across departments. Using TigerConnect's integrated on-call physician scheduling, another customer reduced the amount of time spent on staff scheduling while improving scheduling accuracy and patient outcomes by having the right people focused on caregiving.

In searching for a communications solution, in addition to reading ROI studies, seek references. Most healthcare organizations are sympathetic to the complex task of selecting new platforms and will gladly provide a reference if you contact them.

2. Integration: **Can the CC&C solution easily integrate with other hospital systems? Does the provider possess that integration expertise?**

A comprehensive CC&C solution is far more robust than basic text-messaging applications. CC&C solutions deliver an integrated experience that funnels contextual, real-time messages, data and alerts from a range of systems like the EHR or nurse call systems and centralizes them on a single platform. Care teams can connect via smartphone, tablet, or desktop. Information can be shared via text, photos, or video. Personnel can contact each other via voice or video calling over Wi-Fi and cellular networks. Nurse call and scheduling should be integrated into the main communication interface – which is TigerConnect's approach, eliminating the need for multiple high-traffic apps on staff devices.

Geisinger Health Systems in Pennsylvania improved the delivery of lab test results to real-time status through EHR integration into the TigerConnect platform. A sophisticated solution should integrate with the EHR in a multitude of ways, starting with real-time, alert-based messages that can be redirected to a physician or nurse's smartphone. A more advanced integration could surface patient information within the messaging app through purpose-built screens that allow selective messages to be added to the patient record, saving steps, and reducing medical errors.

To bring a strong ecosystem of innovation on top of the CC&C platform, developer-friendly APIs are a must along with the professional services capability to perform the engineering required to integrate all these systems into a seamless solution. It should not be left up to the hospital to find a third party to tie the CC&C system to transport or alerting systems across the organization.

The realities of integrating information drawn from different systems and a multitude of vendors can be complex and capital-intensive. Does the solution offer its own integrated features such as nurse call or scheduling? If not, it should integrate with established offerings via a sophisticated user experience that makes it easy to adopt these services.

Tackling these integrations requires deep technical expertise, a developer-friendly API, and strategic partnerships with middleware providers. Ensuring your CC&C vendor has the aptitude and resources in such key areas will improve your odds of a successful implementation and future-proof your organization for the coming wave of centralized communication.

3.   Training and support: **What types of training and support are offered to ensure your employees are properly on-boarded and your organization is getting value from the solution?**

High adoption starts with a well-designed, easy-to-use product, beginning with the on-boarding process. A clean, user-friendly design will ensure users embrace the solution and incorporate it into their daily routines, helping achieve meaningful ROI for the organization. For example, TigerConnect makes it easy for new users to see who is on the schedule and message them quickly, driving adoption by alleviating a common staff problem.

And just as the user interface needs to be functional and friendly, so should the administration console. Admins should have the ability to quickly on-board large numbers of users, set or update security policies, and maintain full control over the users on the system. LDAP and Active Directory, Single Sign-On, and SAML support as well as customizable welcome emails and preset training materials will help ensure users get up and running without any issues.

From that foundation, end-user training is required to ensure successful adoption across departments. Employees' grasp of technology varies widely across an organization so it's important that your vendor provides sufficient training and support – either onsite or virtually – for both on-boarding and product education.

TigerConnect can train your teams quickly and offer multiple forms of ongoing support. A team of specialists will work with your IT department to ensure proper setup of the system and any integrations. The team will train your organization through onsite sessions, webinars, how-to videos, FAQs, and other resources highlighting application functionality. TigerConnect's commitment continues with ongoing education and best-practice support around specific workflows. Once your key processes are identified, the best practices gleaned from the industry's top organizations will be applied and leveraged to raise performance.

Because TigerConnect is used at a growing number of healthcare organizations, users also have access to the TigerConnect Community, a unique resource and knowledge sharing site for platform users everywhere. It provides a single place of information both from TigerConnect and from others using the platform to improve patient outcomes and operational workflows.

4. Data and Analytics: **What types of usage data and reporting does the solution track? Does the vendor provide access to analytics and insights to help benchmark your performance against other similar organizations?**

Common types of data that your clinical communications solution should track include usage trends by organization, department, and individuals as well as transactional data. For reporting, the solution should capture real-time data around specific activities, including the metadata related to every message that is sent within your organization, and aggregate it into dashboard and table views. Collectively, these data types will provide a window into your organization's effectiveness in communicating.

While having access to data is important, without benchmarks to compare against, you won't know if you're lagging or ahead of the pack. Your vendor should track and aggregate usage data across their customer base to provide comparative benchmarks that you can use to see how your departments and organization stack up industry-wise. TigerConnect delivers a range of in-app analytics on usage, call volumes and overall engagement so you not only know who is using the tools and how they're using them, you can set alerts when call volumes are rising. This data can be used to identify problem areas and share strategies for raising adoption by retraining teams on underutilized features or implementing certain types of integrations.

5. Security and HIPAA compliance: **Is the solution secure and HIPAA compliant?**

With HIPAA-related fines increasing in both cost and frequency, your clinical communications provider shouldn't expose you to further risk. While most secure messaging vendors list supporting your ability to be HIPAA-compliant in their marketing materials, barring an independent review, this self-anointed claim remains just a claim. Because the Joint Commission is not an enforcement agency, it relies on the vendors themselves to self-adhere to the guidelines.

Identifying vendors with valid 3rd-party security certifications such as HITRUST can help mitigate organizational risk in the event the vendor has a security flaw. Another best practice is to secure assurance from the vendor that they will assume the fines in the event their product results in a HIPAA violation for your organization. For instance, TigerConnect comes with a guarantee of supporting HIPAA compliance. It employs end-to-end encryption to protect patient information.

Focusing on communications-centric vendors is another way to mitigate security issues. Several companies offer messaging products that serve as an adjunct to existing offerings that form the core of their businesses. That means fewer engineering, infrastructure, and support resources are allocated to the communications products potentially compromising ongoing vigilance on security and HIPAA compliance.

6. Reliability and Availability: **How reliable is the platform? Does it have a sustained record of 99.99% uptime or greater?**

Given the mission-critical nature of healthcare, the potential impact of a communications service outage on patient outcomes means that anything less than four 9's in uptime reliability is cause for concern. Healthcare buyers should demand vendor transparency, ensuring they provide verifiable data that supports their uptime claim and 24/7 access to a real-time web reporting page indicating any service interruptions.

For instance, TigerConnect has demonstrated 99.999% uptime with many customers. Additionally, you are backed by HiTrust Certification.

Conclusion

With healthcare transitioning to a value-based model, aggressively managing your bottom line is becoming critically important. Few areas in healthcare today offer such an immediate and substantial return on investment as an integrated, well-supported, data-driven clinical communications solution.

At the end of the day, finding the right clinical communications solution can be a straightforward exercise. By using these important criteria to identify a vendor's strengths and weaknesses, you will have the information and confidence you need to make an informed decision about the right solution for your organization.
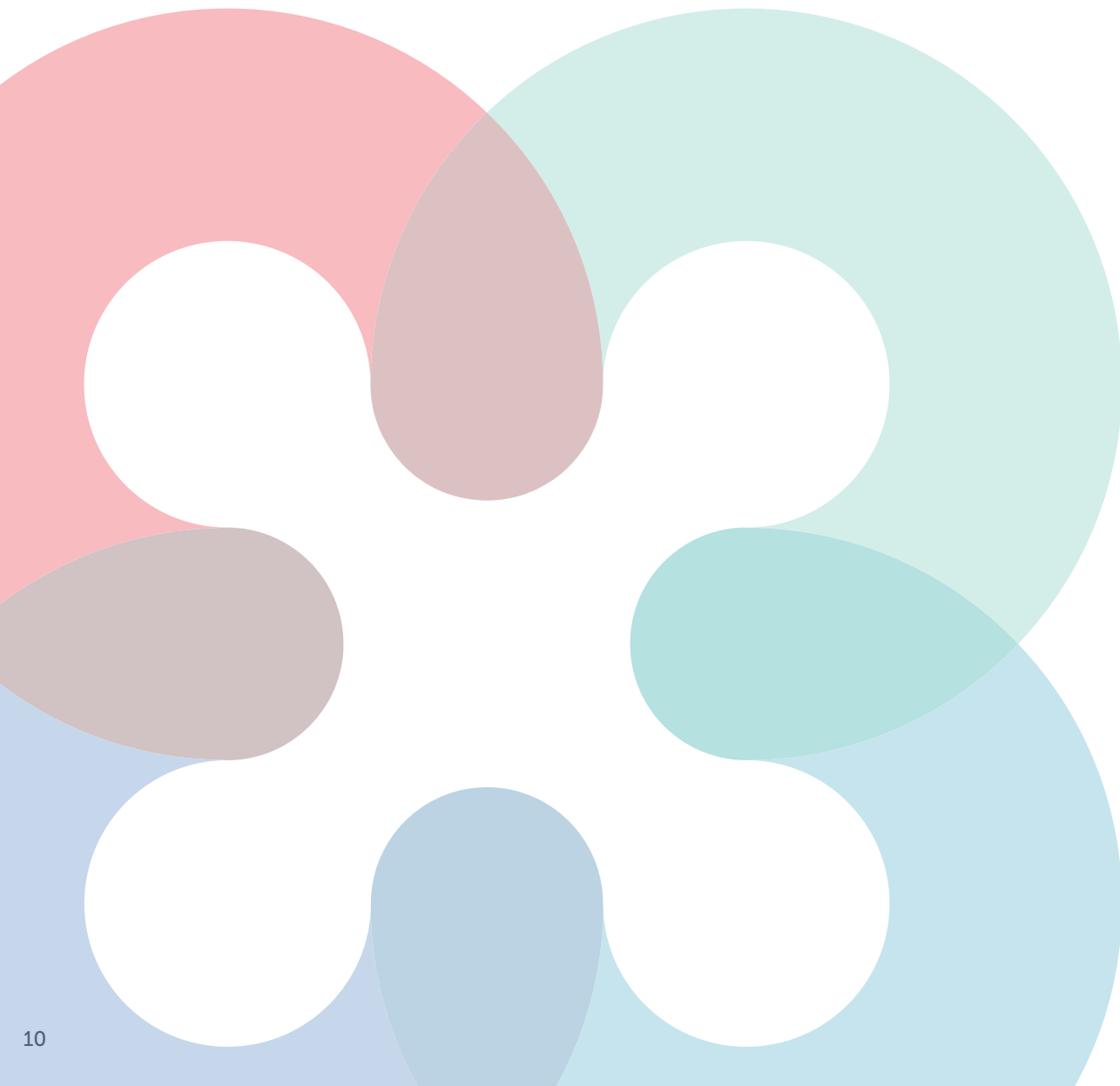
About TigerConnect

TigerConnect transforms healthcare with the industry's most widely adopted clinical collaboration platform—uniquely modernizing the way doctors, nurses, care teams, patients, and data connect. With solutions spanning care communication, patient engagement, scheduling, alarm notifications, nurse call, and more, TigerConnect accelerates productivity, reduces costs, and improves patient outcomes, safely and securely.

Trusted by more than 7,000 healthcare organizations for user-friendly, yet enterprise-ready solutions, TigerConnect delivers 99.99% verifiable uptime for more than 10 million messages each day. To learn more about TigerConnect, visit www.tigerconnect.com.