



New HIMSS Market Insights Research Reveals Workflow Automation Improves Employee and Patient Experiences

By implementing process automation and digital transformation initiatives, healthcare organizations can significantly impact care delivery and the patient experience – but they need the right interoperability capabilities in place to do so

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many healthcare organizations were considering digital transformation (DX) initiatives to improve patient experiences and support more consumer-centric interactions, according to a Deloitte Insights study, *Digital transformation: From a buzzword to an imperative for health systems*.¹ The novel coronavirus, however, accelerated the need to provide a digital front door for patients – and support more seamless, streamlined virtual care.

“What is happening behind the scenes with your information technology (IT) systems very much impacts how patients experience healthcare – but the need to deliver a more seamless experience was never systematically addressed until the pandemic,” Linda Ding, Senior Director of Strategic Marketing at Laserfiche, pointed out. “Then there came a drastic shift toward a more digital-first approach to all consumer-related interactions, with organizations using process automation to create more patient-centric experiences.”

But while healthcare organizations of all sizes embraced new DX initiatives in response to the pandemic, significant gaps remain. There is still ample opportunity to streamline processes to further improve workflows – for both patients and healthcare employees. As noted in a recent HIMSS Market Insights study, *Documentation Automation*, approximately 80 percent of respondents stated their organizations had already invested in automated patient portals, invoicing and medical records management capabilities (Figure 1). Yet only 4 in 10 patients are very or extremely satisfied with those workflow process changes.² Ding said it’s obvious there is plenty of room for improvement.



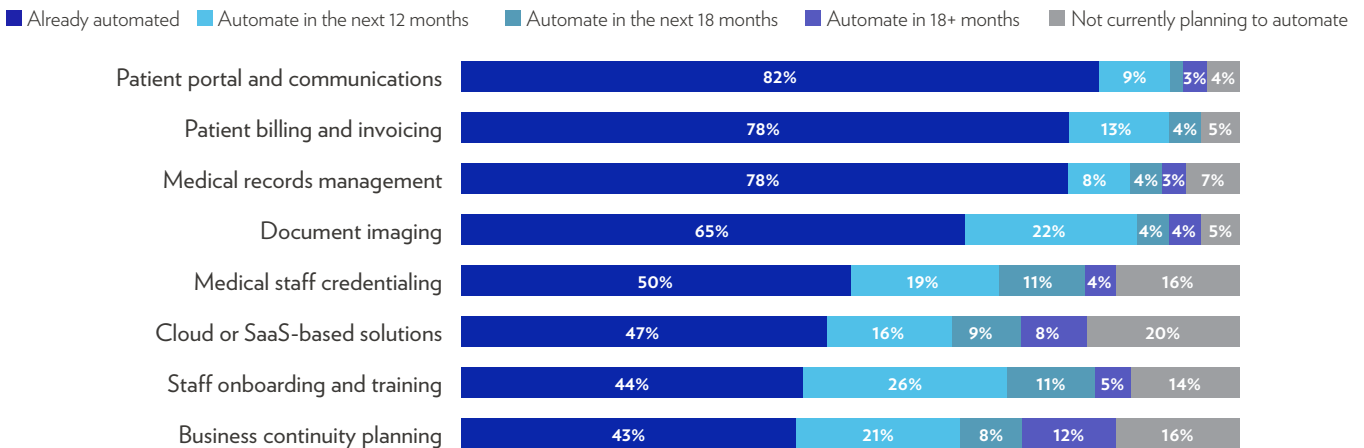
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LINDA DING | Senior Director of Strategic Marketing | Laserfiche

Figure 1. Approximately 8-in-10 have already automated patient portals/communication, invoicing and medical records management

Which of the following workflow processes were changed as a result of the pandemic or plan to be automated in the near future?



'Other' not displayed due to small sample

Data labels under 3% not shown

Base: Total Respondents: n=100

“Too often, what we hear from hospitals is that, yes, they do have a patient portal set up but the underlying way the data is structured means patient records are found across multiple systems on the backend,” Ding said. “Those systems don’t talk to one another – not to help patients or clinicians keep track of treatment history, let alone to conduct any data analysis to help organizations be more proactive about care. That’s a problem.”

Process automation for patients and employees

Certainly, as noted in the Deloitte Insights study, most healthcare organizations are pursuing some form of DX initiative to improve the patient experience. Too often, Ding noted, they don’t put as much emphasis on prioritizing automating back-office processes for their clinicians and employees. Doing so, however, could help organizations not only enhance the day-to-day experiences of their employees and staff members, but also, by extension, improve overall patient satisfaction.

“In today’s world, when you don’t have the process automation tools in place, your employees are likely spending 30 to 40 percent of their day on entering data, following documents, making manual phone calls to track down the patient about appointments or payments,” she said. “When you can automate these tasks, that will free staff members from these arduous activities so they can apply their knowledge and expertise to more human-centric activities – which ultimately impacts patients and their experience with your organization.”

Addressing challenges

Despite the many benefits of process automation, there are several impediments to enabling these experience-enhancing technologies. Survey respondents in the HIMSS Market Intelligence study reported that competing priorities (77 percent), lack of interoperability across systems (55 percent) and inadequate budget (46 percent) were the top challenges encountered when trying to streamline workflows (Figure 2). Ding pointed out that this is not a surprise – and these are

all issues that will increase in significance as provider organizations take on more systems and technologies in the future. That said, there are ways for healthcare organizations to embrace process automation despite the obstacles.

“The reality is that many organizations are not well versed in designing a process automation solution, let alone how to implement it,” she said. “There needs to be a lot more awareness of what tools and solutions are around out there. Technology has caught up. Interoperability isn’t as difficult as it was 10 years ago, and a lot of workflow automation solutions can be designed and implemented with a low-code, no-code approach – meaning you don’t have to do hard coding to improve these high-value processes.”

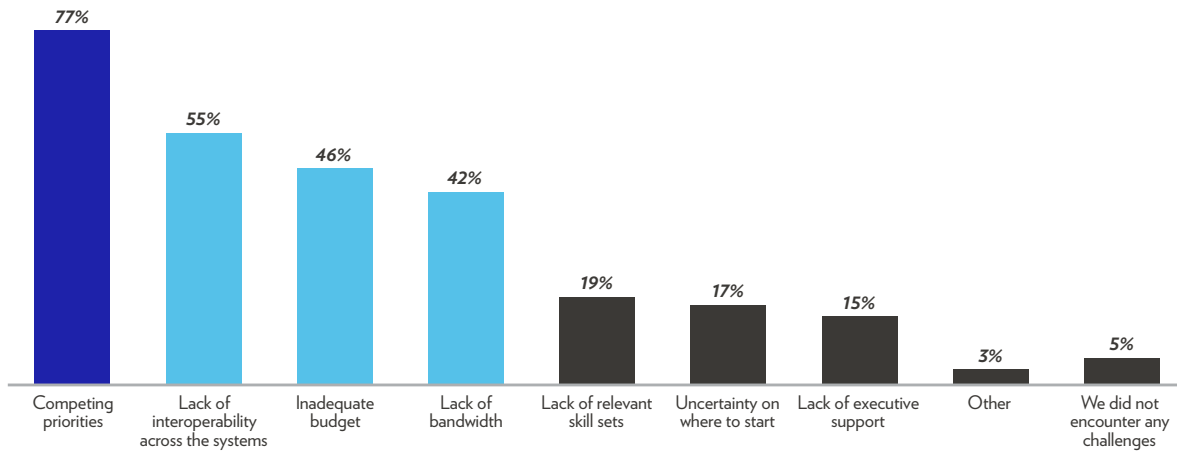
The need to give patients a more consumer-centric experience as they interact with healthcare entities is not going to change. If anything, the demand for more seamless, Amazon-esque experiences, where process automation shares the right data with the right system at the right time, will

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Figure 2. Over half stated the lack of interoperability across systems as a top challenge in making changes to their workflow processes

What challenges did you encounter in making changes to your workflow processes?



Base: Have already automated any workflow process; n= 95

only grow. The good news, according to Ding, is that curating these kinds of experiences for patients doesn't have to be complicated.

“With the advancement of cloud-based solution design, there are a lot of low-code, no-code and patient-centric workflow design tools available to help

organizations put the patient at the center of every encounter,” she said. “These workflows will not only improve the patient experience but patient outcomes – because clinicians and patients will trust that nothing is missing. Everything they need for their care journey is right there for them when they need it to make the right decision for the patient.”

To learn more, visit www.laserfiche.com/solutions/healthcare/ and [read our eBook](#).

References

1. Appleby C, Hendricks J, Wurz J, and Shudes C. (2021). *Digital transformation: From a buzzword to an imperative for health systems*. Deloitte Insights. <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/health-care/digital-transformation-in-healthcare.html>
2. HIMSS Market Insights and Laserfiche. (2021). *Documentation Automation*.

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