

# Part 1: Anticipating Problem Areas and Tips for Successful EHR Implementation

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Finally – you’ve made a decision on purchasing or replacing your electronic health records software. Postpone the sigh of relief until you’ve tackled the next challenge – implementation.

This is the first article in a two-part series that explores the challenge of implementing a new electronic health records (EHR) system or replacing the one you already have. The second part of this series will cover implementation tips and appear in next month’s issue of *The Triangle Physician*.

## Common Problems with Software Implementation

Let’s start with five common problems that frequently occur during software implementation and strategies for overcoming each one.

**Letting the vendor run the show.** The vendor knows the software that you’ve chosen, but successful implementation depends on the development of a collaborative working relationship between vendor and practice. Come with an open mind, be ready to learn, ask many questions and strive to make the solution meet your needs and priorities. Polite assertiveness works better than passivity or hostility.

**Forgetting that implementation involves both technology and people.** Software has many capabilities, but it doesn’t manage people. It’s your job to

deal with both the workforce and with patients. In many instances, what appears to be resistance on the part of a clinician or administrative staff member is a learning difficulty in disguise. Remember that each person learns in different ways. Some of us are visual learners, and others are more “hands on.” One-size training won’t fit all, so make sure the training meets each user at a comfortable place.



**Neglecting to ask about hardware requirements.** All vendors provide specific hardware requirements. Not all practices pay attention, only to discover during implementation that they need to upgrade existing hardware or purchase new hardware to make the new software work. Pay close attention to details before implementation begins.

**Depending on web-based training to save a dime.** Many vendors offer web-based training as an economical method for keeping the cost down. We think

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this method has its place, particularly as a resource for ongoing continuing education after a system has gone live. Prior to go-live, we prefer onsite training or a combination of onsite and web-based training. Both of these options allow practice-vendor interactions.

**Setting unrealistic expectations.** Software implementation is a *process*, not an act. Practices that expect a perfectly smooth ride without bumps in the road are setting themselves up for disappointment. Focus on establishing a trusting working relationship with the vendor, so together you can identify and address questions and issues when they arise. Vendor sales, implementation and technical support staff deserve respect, not anger and negativity.