

Essential Guide

Implementing a Hospital-Wide Policy Management System



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Essential Guide to Implementing a Hospital-wide Policy Management System

There is no doubt that an automated policy management system addresses typical deficiencies associated with a manual document management process in a hospital environment. There are multiple and old copies of policies in circulation, lack of transparency and accountability, missed review and revision dates, no approval records, insufficient approvals and incomplete archives – just to name a few. However, most of the time what stops hospitals from moving forward with an automated system is the enormous effort such implementation may require.

The number of policies and procedures a typical hospital needs to manage and continue to process rarely falls below one thousand. The ongoing management of existing policies, protocols or forms involves a small army of people across all departments that need to author, approve, review, and administer documents. It is not surprising then that the effort required in preparation and pre-implementation review may seem daunting at first.

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However, with the right approach, an experienced vendor and proper structure and support, it is feasible to successfully navigate the implementation tasks and complete review, upload and configuration of your policies and procedures in a manageable time frame.

This document outlines a step-by-step approach to ensure a successful implementation of an automated policy and procedure management system and is a result of first-hand experiences and best practices deploying policy management solutions in hospitals and healthcare organizations for over 10 years.



Table of Contents

Resources	Page 6
8 step overview	Page 9
Step 1: Organize policies and procedures	Page 11
Step 2: Document clean-up	Page 14
Step 3: Develop structure and organization	Page 16
Step 4: Determine responsibilities	Page 18
Step 5: Establish review dates	Page 21
Step 6: Prepare for upload	Page 23
Step 7: Upload / User Training	Page 25
Step 8: Go Live	Page 27

Resources

The most critical factor in a successful conversion from a manual process to an automated policy management system is strong internal leadership support.

It is essential the hospital leadership team clearly communicates and drives home the actual reasons for moving to an automated policy and procedure management system: well managed and organized policies and procedures have direct impact on the quality of patient care and ability of the hospital to follow correct clinical and administrative guidelines.

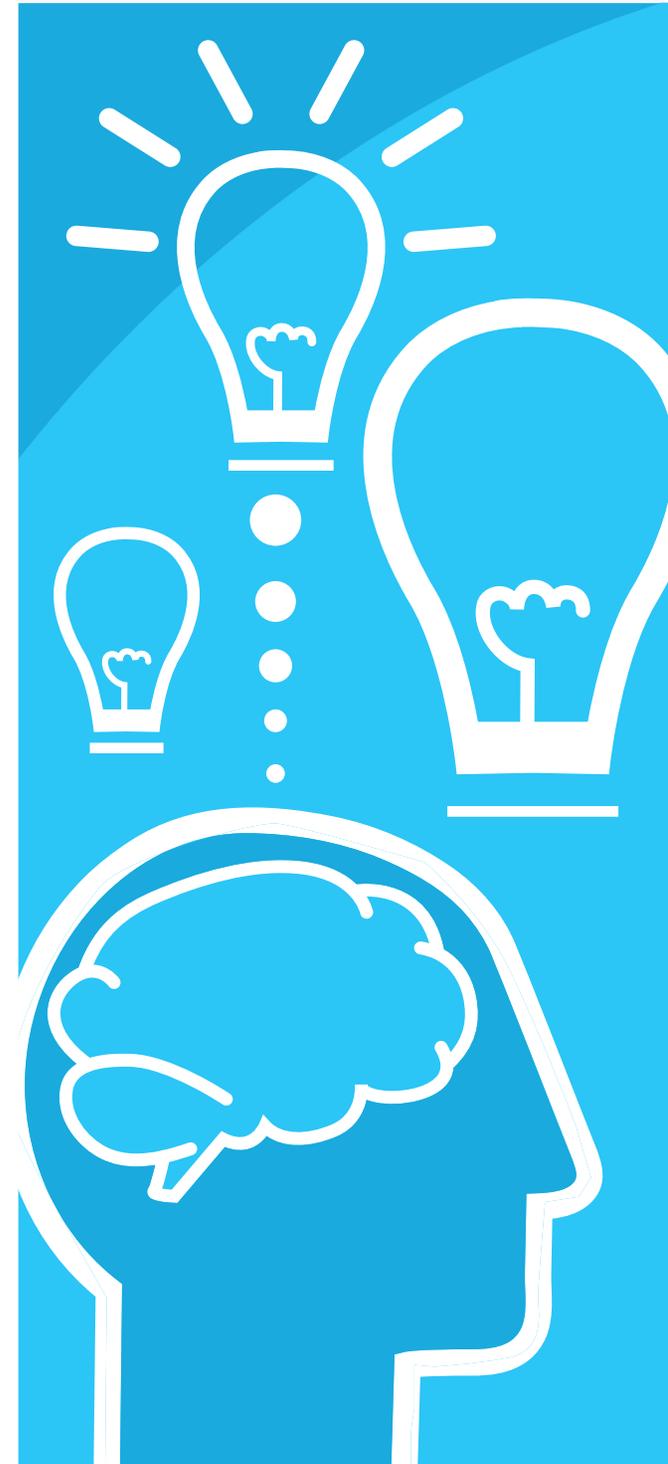
Second, the initial review and preparation steps will affect most departments within the hospital and will require a tremendous effort from all staff involved in the project. Keeping in mind policy review is not necessarily the most fun task you could ask your staff to work on, it is critical an emphasis on a timely completion of related tasks comes from the top.



Resources

Internal Project Manager

Your vendor for the policy and procedure system should provide assistance throughout your implementation life cycle. However, an outside vendor often does not have direct access to internal hospital staff and departments directly responsible for the pre-implementation preparation. An internal project manager that both understands the scope and effort of such a project and can guide others through the pre-implementation tasks, especially in large facility implementations, is truly invaluable. A project manager's tasks not only includes monitoring completion of project management related milestones, but more importantly providing first level assistance as well as serving as a sounding board for many decisions that will need to be made. Having an internal project lead prevents the project efforts from being derailed and keeps everyone involved (including the vendor) aligned around project objectives.



Resources

Vendor Support

Your policy and procedure system vendor should take an active role in your hospital's policy and procedure implementation process alongside the internal project manager. While policy approval workflow should be independent from the intricacies of a software solution you chose to support these processes, the direct implementation and configuration decisions are software specific. A designated resource from your policy automation software vendor should be available to answer any questions and guide your hospital's internal staff through the implementation phases.



8

Steps

for a Successful Policy
— & —

Procedure System Implementation

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8 Steps for a Successful Policy and Procedure System Implementation

As with any project that requires many resources across multiple hospital departments, it is important that you start with a project plan, understand the scope of the project and have a completion deadline in mind that is clearly communicated to all staff involved in the project. Policy review and organization is not the most exciting project, yet something that needs to be done. While an organization should ensure sufficient time be given for getting everything done and done right, you don't want to make it take longer than is absolutely necessary.

The implementation project can be broken down into these 8 manageable steps:

STEP 1:

Organize Policies & Procedures

STEP 2:

Document Clean-up

STEP 3:

Develop Structure & Organization

STEP 4:

Determine Responsibilities

STEP 5:

Establish Review Dates

STEP 6:

Prepare for upload

STEP 7:

Upload / User Training

STEP 8:

Go Live

1

Organize

Policies & Procedures

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Step 1: Organize Policies & Procedures

The first step in the process deals with identifying the scope of the project and initial organization of documents. The effort and time this step will require depends on how your policies are managed currently. If your organization uses an electronic repository for your current documents - even if it is a centralized collection of folders on a shared drive or a web-based repository of links - you are off to a good start. On the other hand, if your policies are in paper binders or spread across departmental computers, you may need to allow for more time to complete this step.

a) Initial “Demo /Preview” Session

It is usually extremely helpful to schedule a short demo/system review session with the vendor and all stakeholders in the project right at the inception of the implementation phase. Having your vendor demonstrate the solution to all staff that will be involved in the system implementation will help get everyone on the same page, and ensure there is a shared “vision” of the final results. This demo/review session should not focus on specific functionalities, but rather provide a general overview of the system.

b) Organize Policies and Related Documents into a Single Location

Typically this means creating a shared network folder with an initial subfolder hierarchy organized by department or a functional area of the hospital and moving copies of policies into these folders

Step 1: Organize Policies & Procedurescontinued

c) Come Up With an Initial List of Policies

The goal of this task is to get a general handle on the total number of documents that will need to be reviewed. Although quite often it is sufficient to get file counts in the centralized folders, some organizations go one step further and create departmental or organization-wide spreadsheet(s) identifying documents that will need to be uploaded. Knowing the scope of the project will help you determine efforts, resources and deadlines for the project.

d) Identify Duplicates

More often than not you will have multiple copies of the same or similar policy in more than one department. Identifying duplicate policies in the initial stage of the policy implementation process will help to reduce the number of documents you will need to upload and configure in the new system.

e) Identify Missing Documents

Lastly, as each department goes through an inventory of their policies, missing policies will likely be identified. Whether a policy is missing altogether, or the source document cannot be found should be noted so it can be addressed accordingly in later stages of the implementation process.

2

Document

Clean-Up

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Step 2: Document Clean-up

Individual files need to be cataloged, reviewed, and potentially fixed. The work needs to be assigned to correct authors. The internal project manager should be keeping track of progress for each department and ensure tasks are completed in a timely fashion. The project manager should identify and clearly communicate objectives, timeline, templates, naming convention, and any other applicable directives and decisions to all staff involved in this step. Also, before this step can be started, the Project Manager, should work closely with the vendor to develop tracking tools, spreadsheets and other methods for cataloging updated policies and procedures

Typically the specific tasks completed in this step include:

- a) Developing and communicating correct document template.
- b) Identifying document authors.
- c) Identifying document revision dates.
- d) Updating individual documents to ensure both the content and the proper templates are in place.
- e) Authoring of missing policies.
- f) Reviewing and merging duplicate policies.
- g) Utilizing correct naming conventions for updated policies.

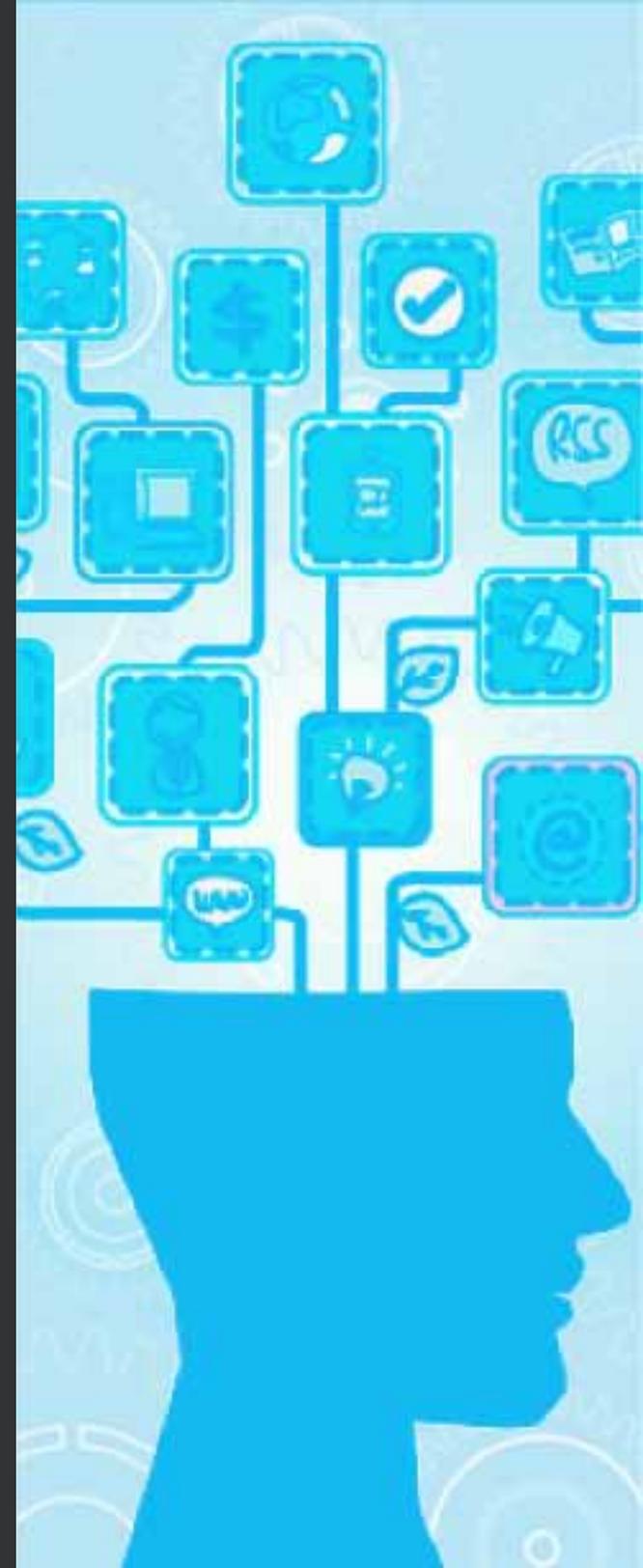
3

Develop

a Structure
for Policies

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Step 3: Develop a Structure For Policies

As the document identification and initial clean-up is underway, the hospital should start designing a general architecture for organization of documents in the new automated system. The policy system implementation process is a great opportunity to take a step back and review the most efficient ways to organize and navigate to hospital's policies and procedures.

As you start drafting the organization of documents for your online repository, you will need to answer the following questions:

Question:

Who will need access to what types of policies and procedures?

Question:

What documents are referenced most often?

Question:

Are there any specific standards, regulations, or maybe internal improvement initiatives you need to follow and will they affect how your documents need to be organized?

As you review these questions, start drafting the layout for your document repositories. It may include separating your Clinical from Non-Clinical policies and procedures, creating a standard set of sub-folders for each department that separate policies from forms and protocols, moving your hospital-wide policies or environment of care policies to separate folders, etc. In terms of shared policies, make sure that you identify if any "shortcuts" need to be created to provide quick access to the same policy without having to manage duplicate documents.

Your new policy and procedure system vendor should be able to assist you in providing best practices feedback and proven approaches that work for hospitals of your size.

4

Map

the Process
& Assign Roles

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5

Dates

Effective &
Next Review Dates

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Step 5: Effective & Next Review Dates

As you continue your document repository clean-up, you need to ensure correct review date requirements are mapped to your policies and procedures. An automated policy management system will send documents through an approval workflow automatically when a revision is due. But this process cannot be triggered if the next review and reminder due dates are not properly configured.

1)

Be realistic with your upcoming review dates. Our recommendation is that you spread your review dates throughout the year so the workload for each reviewer, author or approver is manageable. Even after you have moved to an automated policy and procedure system, a human being will need to be involved in each step of the revision and review workflow. Make sure to plan accordingly

2)

In some cases, hospitals decide to “postpone” some of the clean-up work until after the system is live. In these situations, documents are uploaded into an automated repository even though some of the tasks in Step 1 are skipped. The next review/revision is used for document owners to clean-up documents. If you decide to take this approach, make sure you don’t fall into the same traps that caused your staff not to be able to properly clean up documents in the first place by creating overly aggressive review dates for these documents.

6

Prepare

for Upload

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Step 6: Prepare for Upload

Once your documents are identified, organized and reviewed you can start scheduling an upload of the documents into your new policy management system. The timing of the upload is critical to the success of the project. It is best to avoid a situation when policies will need to be managed and revised in both your old repositories and the new system.

Prior to the upload, it is recommended that a final validation of documents is completed to ensure all aspects of the preparation steps 1 thru 5 have been completed. It is best to involve your policy and procedure system vendor to help in this validation process. It typically includes:

1)

Ensuring the policies are properly organized into a folder structure that will closely mimic organization of documents in the new automated policy and procedure repository as defined in Step 3.

2)

Reviewing of document attributes that will need to be uploaded along with the documents, such as:

a) File naming / document title

b) Designated location of document

c) Effective, review and reminder dates

d) Responsibilities assignments/workflow mapping

7 Upload & User Training

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Step 7: Upload & User Training

The upload step encompasses:

- 1) Physical transfer of documents into the automated policy and procedure repository
- 2) Upload verification
- 3) User Training

Typically the upload task will be completed by your system super users or your vendor, depending on how the implementation responsibilities are defined. If documents are correctly prepared the upload tasks can be completed in a matter of a single day or few days – depending on number of documents and complexity of configurations and settings.

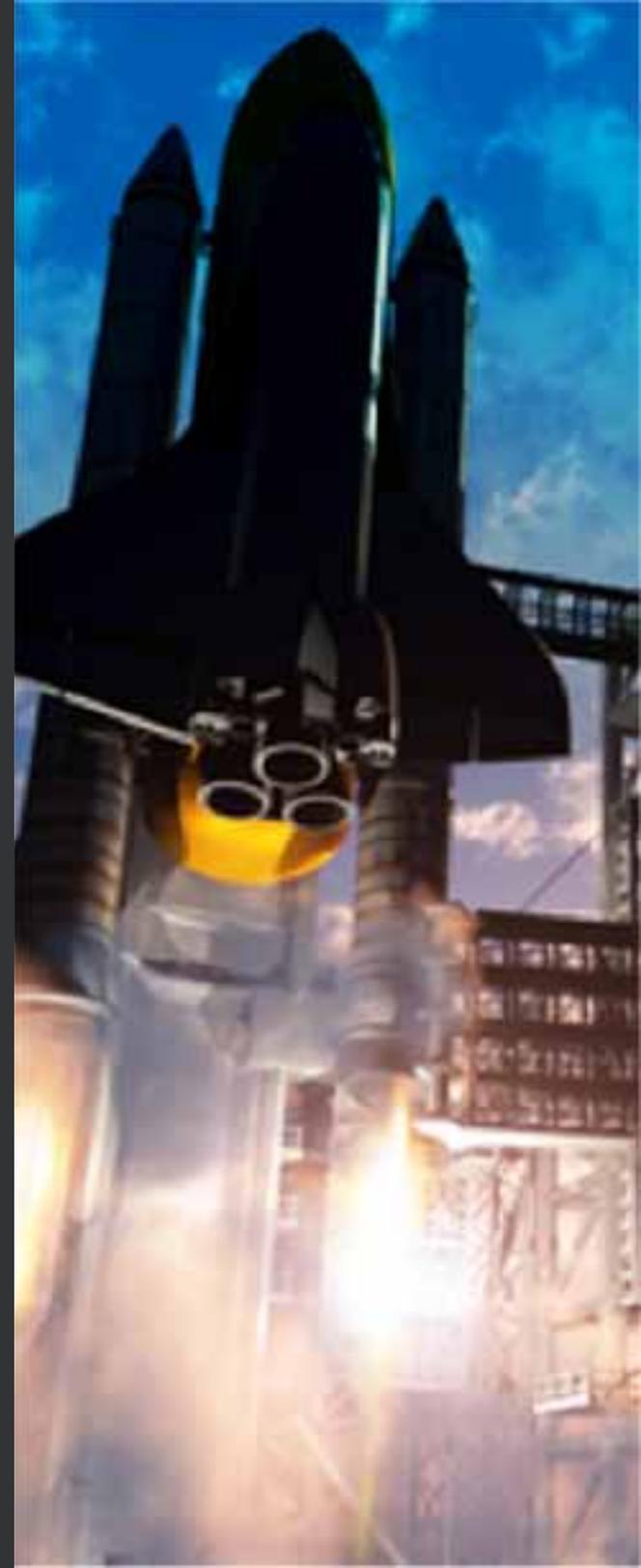
Once the documents have been uploaded, you need to allow time for upload verification and validation tasks. Usually a spot-check verification is sufficient.

8

Go Live

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Step 8: Go Live

If your organization followed the steps outlined in this guide, the system Go Live should be a non-stressful event. Typically the Go Live includes enabling organization-wide access to the system and is considered a “Soft” Go Live.

If your new policy and procedure management system is a web-based platform, likely you will want to configure a quick link to the policy and procedure repository from your Intranet site. If your policy and procedure repository and Intranet are fully integrated (such as the HospitalPortal.net Intranet and policy and procedure System) the policy and procedure functions should seamlessly integrate with the rest of your Intranet including notifications, search and reporting mechanisms.

It may happen that even with the best project manager and vendor support you may be forced to Go Live before you had a chance to prepare all of your policies and procedures for the conversion to the new system, due to conflicting deadlines, resource allocation issues, upcoming audits, or other external factors.

Go Livecontinued

If that is the reality that you are facing, we recommend to follow these guidelines to ensure the project doesn't lose its momentum.

1)

Upload all policies and other documents that have undergone the cleanup and preparation process.

2)

Upload documents for departments and sections that haven't been properly approved. It is better to have all documents in the new repository, even if some are not fully reviewed, than having your users continue accessing multiple systems and repositories for policies and procedures.

3)

For documents that require further clean up:

a. Make sure to assign owners to these documents

b. Set the next revision date for as soon as it realistically achievable to have the documents reviewed and re-approved throughout the system.

Go Livecontinued

If you have followed the steps outlined in this guide, once you have gone live with the new automated policy management system, and assuming the system meets your organization's needs, the system should ensure the policies are properly reviewed and approved going forward. However, human involvement will still be necessary, and it is important to maintain support from the hospital leadership team to ensure the staff doesn't fall back into old ways. The staff needs to be continuously trained, and reminded to complete required tasks based on notifications generated by the system and a designated person or committee needs to periodically review system reports to ensure the tasks are completed in a timely manner.

Feel free to contact us at HospitalPortal.net if we can be of any assistance in your policy and procedure automation process.

Contact Us

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