

Mosaic Life Care “Rips Off the Bandage”

Completing a Full EMR/Patient Accounting Merger in Just 97 (Intense) Days

ST. JOSEPH, MO—Merging two complex and established hospital IT systems is never an easy proposition, but when the CIO of Mosaic Life Care, Brennan Lehman, told his staff they were going to do it before the ink was fully dry on the merger documents, a lot of eyebrows were raised.

The challenge came about after Mosaic Life Care, a health-care system based in St. Joseph, Mo., and St. Louis-based SSM Health, finalized an agreement to transfer ownership of SSM Health / St. Francis Hospital in nearby Maryville, MO. The agreement included St. Francis Hospital and its affiliated outpatient, home care, hospice, and medical group services and locations.

Mosaic’s IT solutions were well established, highly customized, and built around the Cerner platform, while the Maryville facilities operated on a different platform.

Lehman had initially contemplated leaving the Maryville operations on their current system for a period of time—renewing the contract with their legacy vendor—and then making a gradual transition. The problem, he realized, would be that the robust analytics and reporting systems already in-place at Mosaic wouldn’t then be available to the organization’s leadership, as they navigated the merger process—a real disadvantage.

Lehman recalls: *“As we started discussing it, I thought, ‘How do we continue to have transparency with quality measures?’ ‘How do we capture and see all the data to ensure that our Mosaic standards are followed?’ I realized that it would be nearly impossible to get there unless they were on the same [Cerner] system.”*

Having set the goal, Lehman’s next tasks were to inform his staff and help them find a vendor partner that was also up to the challenging task and timeline.

Watch the Mosaic Life Care team discuss the fast-track project and their experience working with the S&P team to get the job done.

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Lehman's IT team at Mosaic were seasoned professionals and most were up for the challenge of the record-setting implementation. The difficulty was in reallocating already lean resources from their current duties and responsibilities.

"I initially thought that I misheard the number of days," says Greg Hart, VP of Enterprise Project Management. "He couldn't have said ninety days," Hart says with a laugh. "I immediately went into planning mode, thinking about all of the teams that we would need to get ready, and all of the projects that were currently in-flight. What would the impact be on them? We have a very strong work ethic here at Mosaic, and very, very bright team members, so I wasn't necessarily concerned about the implementation, it was the upsetting all of the various initiatives that we already had going across the enterprise."

The Mosaic team resolved to find an experienced vendor with deep Cerner capabilities—willing to scope and lead the implementation/migration, provide additional staffing resources—and fully commit to their aggressive deadline.

"We started with an RFP process, basically looking at who could get this done in 90 days. That alone weeded out a vast majority of consultants—even to entertain more discussion," remembers Lehman. "We knew we were asking for a mountain to be moved but at the same time I had the utmost confidence in our team, if we found the right partner to be able to do this."

At the 2018 Cerner Healthcare Conference, the Mosaic team began discussions with one of the RFP respondents, S&P Consultants, a company with a 25 year track record of stepping up to complex and unusual Cerner implementations.

Steve Pace, S&P's VP of Consulting Services reflected on those early talks, noting, "Beyond the aggressive timeframe, there were a lot of challenges around this project—including the fact that some of the last-minute legal negotiations limited us, contractually, in the ways we could communicate with the team at the Maryville facilities. Our ambition was to achieve as close to a 'like for like' situation as possible, but we faced some real hurdles in those early days."

Fortunately, the S&P Consultants team had a well-proven approach for tracking complex Cerner implementations—efficiently identifying current- and future-state requirements, strategizing a workable process, supplying specialized assistance in the form of consultants with clinical or revenue cycle experience, and providing robust communication throughout the project.

One of Mosaic's primary concerns was being able to implement their many Cerner 'add-ons'—specially built reporting and analytics tools, often incorporating other third-party solutions. Having S&P as an objective and experienced resource proved very helpful in accomplishing this part of the transition.

"We've had Cerner since 2002 and we've customized several things," explains Brenda Williams, VP Technology for Mosaic. "S&P had the expertise that helped us move the same customization from our organization here in St. Joseph to the organization there in Maryville. In addition to Cerner, we had a variety of vendor point solutions and S&P helped us with those interfaces and the connections to get all the solutions working at Maryville as well."

Beyond the EMR and patient-facing systems, Mosaic maintained an extensive and well-developed Revenue Cycle system as well, based on Cerner Patient Accounting, but also leveraging other solutions.

“In revenue cycle alone, we have half a dozen bolt-on technologies that interface through the Cerner platform,” explains Deborah Vancleave, VP of Revenue Cycle for Mosaic. “It was a configuration which made it that much more difficult to ensure the testing went well and that the interfaces were set up correctly.”

The S&P team leveraged many of the elements of its S&P InTegritySM approach during the Mosaic project.

“We recognized early on that the Mosaic team was very collaborative and open to suggestions, which made everything both smoother and more pleasant,” recalls Rodney Buford, Director of Consulting Integrity for S&P Consultants. “We set up workgroups that allowed us to identify the appropriate team members and stakeholders for individual IT solutions. This allowed us to set up very efficient communications and collaboration processes and keep everything moving right along. Having great project management experience on both sides of the table was a huge asset in successfully completing the project within this incredible timeframe.”

Talent-matching was also helpful when it came time for training staff at the newly-acquired facility.

“We had match for match, as far as partnering our teams,” says Marsha Pryor, VP of Projects and Programs for Mosaic. “I remember we had consultants who had expertise in mental health, so they paired with our mental health unit during the first two or three weeks of implementation. S&P provided a consultant with nursing expertise who also knew the physician workflow. So, it was very obvious to us that our caregivers in Maryville gravitated towards these resources. In fact, when we were scheduled to terminate the resources, they came to me and said, ‘Hey, could we have them for an extra week?’”

“ I think if you look at Mosaic you’ll see that the value added of a third party consultant who has done this multiple times. A consultant team that has the clinicians, has the skills. Consultants who can build those relationships and make the physicians, nurses, radiologists, lab techs, feel comfortable and relieve that anxiety because they’re working with people that know how to do it and how to get it done.

I know this is going to sound a bit Polly Anna-like, but at the end of the day, it’s about wanting to provide good patient care. Our people take our work very personally and never forget that it could be our moms, our sisters or our sons in those beds. So we all go into every project with that goal of providing great customer service to enhance patient care. That’s what drives us. That’s what makes us better.”

Kandi Bickett

S&P’s Executive Director of Client Services

S&P's Executive Director of Client Services, Kandi Bickett, was not surprised by the positive reception in light of shared expertise, and a bonding that tends to occur over a common set of values she says are in evidence across the S&P Consultants organization:

CIO Lehman appreciated the deep expertise, the shared values/work ethics, and the broad perspective the consultants offered. *"S&P actually brought a lot of best practices to us. They were able to find savings within our revenue cycle build. Based on their experience with a variety of clients, they said, 'Hey, if you reconfigure this build you'll actually see immediate savings.' So those kind of things where they introduced their best learnings from multiple different sites, helped us immediately."*

"Without S&P's expertise we wouldn't have gotten through it," Lehman concludes. *"I was recently networking with a few of my peers. They're going through some acquisitions of their own and were floored that we were able to get across the line—in 97 days—with 130 disparate systems plus a core EMR. And I said I couldn't have done it alone. Thank God for S&P."*



ABOUT S&P CONSULTANTS

S&P Consultants enjoys a 25-year reputation for “doing the right thing” in healthcare IT, facilitating realistic interactions among all parties in HIS implementations. Their InTegritySM approach provides a solid “genetic roadmap” and adaptive framework to organizations looking to assure the success of complex projects.

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ABOUT MOSAIC LIFE CARE

Mosaic Life Care is a physician-led organization comprised of three hospitals and more than 60 outpatient locations and clinics throughout the Northwest Missouri region. Mosaic Life Care is a past recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and was the first in Missouri chosen to become a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network.

Mosaic Life Care

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