

> 14-Step RIS/PACS Preparation Process



Execute these steps throughout the RIS/PACS selection process to achieve a smoother, more efficient experience and quicker implementation starting point for your facility.

It is recommended that you document the information uncovered in these steps.

1. Lay out a timeline of when the key actions need to be completed.

Consider the target dates you have in mind for key actions to be completed and start backwards from the system “Go Live” date. Determine how long each action will take internally, as well as discussing timing and expectations with your vendor and possibly other vendors depending on the integrations you will have. Plug in the specific actions and dates in your timeline.

Key Actions: (You may have more based on the unique needs of your practice/radiology dept.)

- Select vendor
- Execute contract
- Implementation and training
- System “Go Live”

2. Determine the key person/team managing selection of the RIS/PACS, as well as the key person handling implementation of the RIS/PACS.

The implementation project manager should be included on the selection team. Make this team small but effective. Solicit the opinions of key users with certain areas of expertise at the appropriate times (i.e., bring in your scheduler to review the product’s scheduling functionality, or radiologists to review the diagnostic workstation, or keep your IT/IS manager in the loop throughout the entire process). Typically, you cannot expect to please all of the users. It also is unrealistic to expect to find a system that is a perfect match with your facility. You will achieve positive results with a system that is a 90 percent fit.

3. Determine the specific workflow and business objectives you want to achieve by implementing a RIS/PACS. Typical objectives are:

- Increase efficiencies in workflow and image routing distribution
- Integrate/automate front office and billing processing with electronic claims submission to accelerate cash flow and reduce lost charges

- Increase understanding of revenue stream through reporting capabilities allowing for increased marketing opportunities and more referrals
- Reduce film storage, retrieval and distribution costs
- Improve communication between radiologist and transcriptionist in order to reduce errors and improve report turnaround time
- Increase referring physician satisfaction and repeat business by a quicker scheduling process, faster report delivery, and easy access to patient information and status tracking

4. Determine the criteria (in order of priority) for selecting the RIS/PACS based on your needs.

- Overall approach to radiology workflow
- Specific functionality (scheduling, diagnostic workstation tools, billing)
- Interconnectivity, interoperability and integration capabilities within RIS/PACS, as well as to external systems and modalities Implementation approach (often times this is not given enough weight)
- Support services
- Vendor’s company structure, philosophy, people, future product path and industry alliances

5. Research and shop around.

Search the Internet. Talk to peers. Talk to vendors and ask questions. Ask vendors to provide you with a quote. Determine pricing ranges and models and discuss licensing arrangements. Make sure you are looking at the same functionality, interfaces, and services when comparing vendors to each other.

6. Review a product demonstration.

Most vendors can conduct a demonstration of their software via the Internet. This method can speed up the process and allows more convenience when scheduling your staff. Make sure the vendor shows or explains your key selection criteria items.

7. Narrow your selection down to three vendors that most closely meet your needs.

8. Conduct an on-site vendor meeting.

Review the proposal and have in-depth conversations regarding the vendor’s system deployment. After reviewing the vendor’s quote, determine the total system cost including software, hardware, interfaces, implementation, training and support.

9. Select your “Vendor of Choice” based on your previously defined selection criteria and research done so far.

10. Thoroughly check references.

11. If necessary, have your Vendor of Choice arrange a visit to a site that is using their product. This is a way to confirm that your choice is a good one and helps to finalize the selection process. Having well-defined selection criteria will eliminate the necessity to go on multiple site visits, which can be costly, time consuming and confusing.

12. Determine and execute your internal management action steps required to complete the agreement. This stage is typically when the process begins to get delayed. If no plan is set in motion, it is easy to miss the targeted contract execution date and subsequent “Go Live” date. Although this seems obvious, executive commitment to the purchase prior to the start of the selection process will help ensure timely contract execution and system “Go Live”.

13. Negotiate price, terms and conditions.

14. Sign and execute the agreement.

About Merge Healthcare

Merge Healthcare is the leading provider of enterprise imaging and interoperability solutions. Merge solutions facilitate the sharing of images to create a more effective and efficient electronic healthcare experience for patients and physicians. Merge provides enterprise imaging solutions for radiology, cardiology and orthopaedics; a suite of products for clinical trials; software for financial and pre-surgical management, and applications that fuel the largest modality vendors in the world. Merge’s products have been used by healthcare providers, vendors and researchers worldwide to improve patient care for more than 20 years. Additional information can be found at www.merge.com.

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