

Put Technology to Work to Save Time!
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How busy are you? It doesn't matter how busy your neighbor tells you he is, you know you are even busier! You can fit more in a day than the next guy, and usually you've accomplished more before the next guy even wakes up in the morning! Here are some time-saving tips that technology can bring to your personal and professional life.

- Keep your emails short and specific so they get read and acted upon quickly!
- Download documents to your PDA with Documents To Go (www.dataviz.com) so you have what you need with you at any time you need it.
- Protect the data on that PDA. Two sources: www.trustedigital.com or www.tealpoint.com
- The PDA is a good tool to capture charges for services outside the office – like the nursing home or hospital. Ask your practice management system vendor or look into www.mdeverywhere.com
- www.learnthat.com is a resource for free training – get your staff comfortable with technology at little/no direct cost. Remember, you will need to schedule time for their training during the work day or pay for evening or weekend training time.
- Telecommuting can be effective beyond your transcriptionist – think of the coding and billing staff and even phone operations. www.telecommute.org
- Use your network server to store forms. Instead of staff making copies of copies, let them access what they need in a forms directory so that clean, easy-to-read printed documents are produced as needed.
- Just do the back up! Not just your practice management system, but your entire PC network so that all those documents and forms and accounts payable records are all safely stored and retrievable if a problem occurs. Investigate internet-based services for back up such as www.livevault.com or www.offsitebackup.us
- Do you have a physical inventory of your PC network? Do you know what software is loaded on which PC's? And, do you have the CDs for that software in secure storage so that you can readily access them and restore the PC?
- Passwords are troublesome but are a necessity. Be sure that you force a password change for all users on your network at least once per quarter. Do not allow staff to post their passwords anywhere. Change all passwords for all staff and providers whenever an employee resigns or is terminated.
- Do you often have a document on your office PC that you wish you could access when you are at home working? Two options to connect your PC's are www.beinsync.com and www.laplink.com
- Handwritten notes are tough to always transcribe and can be costly. But if you want to get patient visit templates that are handwritten into an electronic file without transcribing, or just your notes from a monthly meeting, try the io2 Digital Writing System (www.logitech.com) or NexConcepts Mobile Notetaker (www.nexconcepts.com).
- Phone messages are always a problem in medical offices. It is too easy for the slips of paper to get stuck to the wrong paperclip on another chart, or to get left/lost inside a chart. Try an electronic message tool like PhonePad (www.cybercom-software.com) or NotifyMD (www.notifymd.com).
- Be wary of using IM (instant messaging) within your office unless you are doing it behind your firewall where it is secure and encrypted. You should be able to audit and report activity and lock out unauthorized access too.

- Even if your practice management system cannot scan insurance cards, you can! A separate database of the scanned records is more efficient than photocopied cards filed in the patients' paper medical charts. Look into www.medicscan.com or www.ambir.com/pp
- Are you still tracking referrals and biopsies and labs and allergy shots and mammograms and ... in the spiral-bound notebooks? Start using the free tool at www.physicianspractice.com/tools/labtracking.xls and you'll have better control and management for patient care.
- Do you get all your patients' insurance verification done in advance of their scheduled appointments? Automate this function in a batch transaction to save time and improve your staff's effectiveness with a transaction based service www.medconnect.com.
- Medical practices have experienced a 10% reduction in their accounts receivable when they start to accept online payments from their patients. Talk to your practice management system vendor and your web site provider.
- On average, it takes about one-and-a-half to two hours every week to file and retrieve EOMB's (Explanation of Medical Benefits). Imagine what your biller could do with an additional couple of hours each week! Talk to your banking partner about their lockbox services where you can get your EOMBs scanned in and available to your staff online.
- How much time do your nurses and reception staff spend managing the pharmaceutical representative visits? At no cost to your practice you can use an online scheduling solution to eliminate drop in visits and wasted time. www.reconnect.com or www.preferredtime.com
- Save more time and wasted steps by replacing your printers with all-in-one-devices so that nurses can fax, scan, copy and/or print all at their workstation. Eliminate all those steps, the wait at the copier or fax machine, and the associated chit-chat too!
- Let your patients check-in and make their co-payment at a kiosk in your reception area. www.galvanon.com
- Is your receptionist conflicted as to the number one priority? Is greeting the patient top of the list? But what about the phone ringing? Move the incoming telephone lines to the back office and train staff to schedule appointments on your system. You'll improve the quality of that first patient interaction and most likely your reception staff will more accurately register patients.
- How often does your check out staff call back to nursing to ask where in the doctor's schedule they can work in a follow up appointment? If your providers are booked solidly for two-to-three weeks, those 10-day follow up appointments your doctors order will be tough to fit in and the scheduling staff has to check with nursing. Instead, train your nurses to schedule those follow up appointments that fall within that heavily booked period. You'll no longer tie up your check-out staff and your patients while the staff try to call back to the nurse to ask where best to fit that patient into the schedule.
- Use your appointment scheduling system to track follow up for your patients. It may be very inefficient to schedule a six-month follow up or an annual physical when neither your physicians nor your patients really know their calendar that far out, so instead, book a recall/reminder on your scheduling system and get that patient back in when you are less likely to have a no-show in your day.
- Investigate automated telephone reminder systems such as www.phonetree.com, www.medvoice.com, www.televox.com for cost-effective and efficient patient appointment reminder calls. You'll be assured of the task always getting done, and your staff can focus on those tasks that must be attended to in person.
- Invite your patients to get their prescriptions re-issued via your web site. You'll cut down on incoming phone calls (as many as 35% of all calls coming into a primary care practice are for prescription re-issues) and by eliminating those interruptions, you'll process the re-issues more

effectively. Look to www.medfusion.net or www.relayhealth.com. And, as a bonus, you can deliver test results to your patients via your web site too.

The approach to effective use of technology tools is incremental. If you wait until the next version comes out, or the next upgrade, or the complete interface, or ... you will miss many opportunities to reap incremental benefits. "All or nothing" is a losing proposition. Take small steps down the path of technology and gain big returns for your practice.