



### **An Outsiders Perspective: Go-Lives**

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It's finally here!! After many months of preparation by a bevy of departments and staff members, the new application is ready to 'go-live.' Everyone is bracing themselves for the event and people are being pulled from all over the hospital to support the live while consultants are being temporarily placed on the units for additional support. It is really an exciting, nerve wracking time for any hospital IT staff.

We had the opportunity to support multiple Soarian® go-live events in the last few months during which time we learned how different facilities approach these events. When outside people help support a live – consultants, vendor staff, or facility personnel that have not been involved in the implementation and go-live preparations – we have noticed that there are steps that a support team can take to ensure the outside personnel are well equipped to support the event.

Support staff from outside the project team needs specific information:

- 1) What applications are going live at this time?
- 2) Who are the primary users of the new applications?
- 3) Is there an application that is being replaced or is this a brand new application for users which will replace manual processes?
- 4) In addition to the application changes, what process changes have been made that support staff should know about?
- 5) What areas will be supported and what do people not familiar with these areas need to know? Does support staff need special access to these areas?
- 6) What are the security protocols for the facility in general and the units in particular?

Consider holding abbreviated pre-live training for your support staff. Take the time, prior to sending new support staff up to the floors, to hold a quick informal class on how your environment is supposed to work. For example, each team lead for the impacted applications (reporting, orders, security, OMS, etc.) should update the support staff on pertinent facility specific processes and system design. This could be accomplished with pre-live education materials created to target the support staff or by holding a revolving update for each of the application areas. Stress any areas that are specific to the hospitals environment. Every hospital has some little things they do differently. This quick review can help to avoid misunderstandings on those segments of your pathways that stray away from model.

Once the go-live event commences, communication must be a top priority both from the command center to the end user and support staff as well as between support staff out on the units. Some facilities enable easy communication by distributing various devices such as: phones, pagers, or other voice to voice devices. This helps support staff in the facility to communicate with each other allowing coverage shifts from slow to active areas, issue alerts, or shift/production changes made during the event. However, regardless of the chosen tool or methodology, support staff communication is a major key to timely support of the facility staff. Make sure that the outside resources are introduced to the command center staff and the key players they will be working with as they assist with the go-live. Make sure that the outside resources understand the strengths of the people in the command center. If you have a network analyst answering the issues call line at night, make sure that the support staff calling issues in understands that the person on the other end of the phone has little or no experience working in a clinical setting with this software. This can really help with communication in times of crisis.

Once you have mapped out a communication strategy, make sure that your staff is aware of and are committed to using the chosen go-live issue reporting and tracking methodology. It is important for all support personnel to know the process for reporting so that each issue, regardless of size or perceived importance, is triaged, recorded, and tracked. Too often

someone takes an issue to their favorite analyst for resolution which leaves you with issues untracked and/or people stepping on each other as they try to resolve the same issue.

Another piece of communication that is important: timely updates to reported issues. It may sound simple, but it is often overlooked in the hectic environment of a command center. If an issue is resolved the user needs to know of the resolution in a timely manner. This reinforces the user and helps garner confidence in the new system as well as the support team. If an issue is not resolved, the user needs to be informed of the progress and when a resolution is expected. A voice to voice report of these resolutions (or pending resolutions) may be impractical because of unit workloads and schedules. In order to facilitate communication an issue log is recommended. The log can be kept on the facility intranet or with manual logs. The unit support team can help keep manual log entries and record responses that staff can check as time allows.

It is also a good idea to update the rest of the support staff as soon as possible when an issue is resolved. This is especially important when the resolution is a process change or workaround. More often than not, when one user reports a problem, five others are encountering the same issue and not reporting it. While the support teams are on the units, they can help to disseminate the information concerning the fix to the users. It makes everyone's life easier when an issue is encountered if all the support staff have current information. One way to keep support staff informed of known issues and resolutions is through pre- and post-shift meetings. These meetings should be run by project leadership and include support staff as well as command center personnel. It is very useful for facilities to have printed reports with issues and resolutions that support staff can reference during a shift. The updates are best when they include major issues and resolutions from the entire go-live and all issues from the previous day. The issues can be grouped by frequency and area, allowing support staff to know what to address with end users.

Staffing levels are a huge concern during go-lives. The amount of staffing required changes according to the size of the units involved and the impact of the change that is being implemented. If, for example, the nursing staff is going live with on-line documentation and they, historically, documented all on paper the impact on their daily routines is much larger than facilities that are simply switching systems. This may be the first time some of the staff has had to use a computer for an extended length of time, so in addition to system training, fundamental desktop training may need to be incorporated. Additional time will need to be allowed during each initial shift to accommodate the new processes involved as this change will affect every aspect of their daily routine. The best support set up we have seen for an event like this is to have super users stationed at each nursing unit and floating super users/consultants to back up that support when things get busy. If your event involves CPOE know when each physician typically rounds and have a support person available for questions. If possible, keep the same support staff working with the same group of clinicians. If a support staff member works with the same nurse stations and shifts through the entire live, a trust is usually developed and helps to facilitate a more open and honest line of communication. Equally as important is having enough people at the help desk and command center to address issues immediately as they come in. Issues need to be triaged correctly in order to determine if the problem should be addressed immediately, as well as which analyst it should be sent to or if it should be put on a list for correction at a later date.

At all of the hospitals the most troublesome issues on day one of all of the live events that I participated in were centered on access or security. Either a user could not get in to a system at all or else could not get to the proper system area in order to get the job done. This type of issue causes immediate frustration with the system and leaves a negative perception of how the system will work. For example, we recently have been assigned the support of physicians who were to place orders, but they did not have the proper security set up to allow them access to Soarian. When the login attempt failed the physicians' first response was that the system must not work and the experience left them with a negative impression of the system. After their access was fixed they found the system to be both intuitive and helpful, but the first impression was difficult to overcome. This damage control effort could have easily been prevented with proper planning and testing. In order to minimize negative first impressions it is imperative that access is set up as completely and accurately as possible for the first day.

There are always going to be issues when going live with a new system. There are many things that you will not encounter until you start using the system in a live setting. With everyone working together and communicating effectively your live event will be a success.

If you need any more tips on go-lives please contact VCS at 610.444.1233 or [vcs@getvitalized.com](mailto:vcs@getvitalized.com).