

Cloud-Based Managed Services Enable You to Do What You Do Best: Focus on Patient Care

By implementing a cloud-hosted electronic health record (EHR) system with Managed Services you'll gain a significant advantage over those who continue to use an on-premises (on-prem) model. The cloud-based approach, now central to modern technology strategy, offers distinct benefits for hospitals, clinics, providers, and patients. A cloud-based strategy, managed by an experienced IT services partner, can help to address your current needs, build capabilities for the future, and ensure that your critical data is always secure and accessible.

Gartner has predicted that 75 percent of all healthcare provider organizations will have a formal cloud strategy in place by 2022.* A mid-2021 industry survey confirms this trend, noting that 46 percent of HCOs already have cloud computing in their EHR strategy, and another 32 percent may be considering the available options: public cloud, private cloud, and on-prem solutions. Those who join this trend gain improved data security, greater operational flexibility, and scalability, and reduced fixed costs. Perhaps most importantly, shifting to the cloud can get your IT team out of the data center business so they can instead focus on bringing innovation and value to the patient experience through improved technology.

Protection Against Costly Data Breaches

The level of core technology required to securely handle patient data is rapidly outpacing the capabilities of hospital IT operations. Nearly nine out of ten HCOs (88 percent) report they have a secondary data center and thus some level of data security, but when self-managed, they may fall short. Managed Services providers can ensure that you gain best-in-class protection against data-security threats such as the increase of cybersecurity events (phishing, hacking, ransomware). Know that your medical records are high-value targets for criminal extortion. At least 70 percent of all HCO ransomware attacks involve data-extortion attempts.

Furthermore, compliance to ever-expanding regulatory rules requires increasingly complex technologies. Meeting these requirements is beyond the capacity of most hospital IT departments. Data breaches—even minor ones—must be reported, often resulting in costly fines, time-consuming data recovery efforts, and a negative impact on a hospital's reputation.

Cloud hosting companies can protect against hacking threats and data breaches by providing:

- Routine security patches and audits
- Frequent software updates to ensure regulatory compliance
- High-redundancy and air-gapped, geographically distributed backups to ensure fast data recovery in a critical event

Ideal Data-Storage Environments

Is your on-prem data center providing a sufficiently stable and secure physical environments for EHR delivery? In-house data centers often occupy less-than-ideal, retrofitted spaces within hospitals. Are you keeping your data center dry, providing effective ventilation, controlling for electrical capacity, and maintaining adequate telecommunications?

Third-party data centers offer optimal environments:

- Reliable redundant heating, ventilation, and cooling systems
- Sophisticated protection against fire and water damage
- High standards for data-center security

Smart Use of Resources

Building and maintaining your own on-prem data center infrastructure can be time-consuming and expensive. Mid-sized HCOs, for example, have an average of \$4 million dedicated to each iteration of their three-to-five-year infrastructure refresh cycle. Managed services providers can help you avoid these recurring capital expenditures and achieve economies of scale that simply aren't otherwise possible for an HCO of any size. The cost savings to you can be significant—and built into the contract.

- By moving to a cloud-based strategy, you will no longer need to make significant capital investments in data infrastructure. Data management becomes a predictable operational line item/monthly cost.
- Any necessary expansion of your on-prem data center will likely compete for square footage with your other clinical spaces. By moving a majority of this equipment off site, your physical spaces can be repurposed as revenue-generating clinical areas or used to create more office space.
- Cloud-based solutions lead to improved data management performance, creating better value for your clinical staff and the patients they serve.

Flexible, Affordable Capacity

Your existing on-prem infrastructure may be hindering your use of meaningful technologies that support innovation. Ideally, you should have flexible platforms that can be readily customized and scaled to meet specific business needs. Cloud hosting solutions allow organizations to implement technology faster with fewer ramp-up barriers.

- Your new-technology rollouts can occur without the risk, delay, and cost of capital purchases. For example, during high-load or high-volume events, you can spin up servers to increase processing power, then spin them back down when they are no longer needed.
- Consider the simplification and cost savings: To increase your in-house server capacity for a pressing need, it could take two or three months for funding and installation. In contrast, managed cloud solution providers can spin up capacity in a single day. And when no longer needed, they'll immediately discontinue the capacity and its associated expense.

- You won't need to create your own disaster recovery solution. Cloud providers offer sophisticated data protection solutions via diverse remote locations.

FMDH continues to enjoy partnering with Tegria. Our deep knowledge, quick and effective customer service, and willingness to jump in at any time to solve a problem makes us their preferred partner for integrating technology and accelerating revenue.

Practical Growth Path

Managed services partners offer hybrid solutions that allow a cloud-first, but not a cloud-only, strategy. Thus, your migration to and from the public cloud (e.g., Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud) can happen in stages with minimal disruption to existing operations. Some data, such as your legacy EHRs, can be moved permanently to the public cloud.

Automation tools and technologies can simplify data movement between public and private clouds for:

- Routine back-ups and data archiving
- Sandbox versions for testing and development environments
- Database replications for running reports while the primary system operates at full capacity

A cloud-based approach lets the hospital IT system capacity readily expand or contract, depending on business goals and needs. Instead of making large capital outlays for on-prem servers, the organization pays only for the capacity they need.

Improved Innovation Capabilities

With cloud-based management solutions, your organization can leverage new technology rapidly and efficiently to improve service delivery.

- Most innovation is happening in the cloud, not in on-prem databases and software. Examples of this include AI, machine learning, and the big data space, all of which can require huge amounts of processing power at times and much lower amounts of power at other times. Cloud computing provides on-demand resources for which you'll only pay for what you use.
- Third-party IT services partners with deep cloud experience can help you be ready for cloud-native add-ons such as remote patient monitoring, telehealth, and custom lab-management tools.
- Freed from managing an on-prem data center, your IT leaders can focus on adding value to the organization and transforming the patient experience through better technology solutions.

Dependable IT Expertise

Recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining properly skilled IT experts can be difficult, especially in smaller cities and rural areas, but also in urban areas with highly competitive labor markets. And when your IT employees are providing round-the-clock support, the potential result is burnout.

Staff turnover can be costly to you from a financial and operational standpoint. Nearly one quarter of surveyed IT executives identified “lack of technical talent” as their biggest challenge to implementing infrastructure strategy. To mitigate this problem, 63 percent of these HCOs indicated they’re turning to outside support, including cloud-dedicated IT staff via managed services contracts.

As healthcare technology becomes more complex, a cloud-based management team can avert skill gaps—providing deep expertise and 24/7 IT coverage to augment your existing team. Long-term relationships with EHR providers and other vendors allow for proactive data monitoring and troubleshooting.

Reliable User Experience

Consider the user-experience benefits of hosted solutions. Most HCOs require system downtime for EHR upgrades—as often as four per year, with typical system downtimes as high as two hours per event. This imposes a considerable risk to system disruption and user satisfaction. A well-managed EHR platform provides a consistent high-quality experience with virtually no unplanned downtime. Fast, reliable technology delivery means:

- Transparent IT delivery for patients as they access their electronic medical records, scheduling appointments, telehealth sessions, etc.
- Providers and staff can focus on patient care and guest services without the technology-based distraction and delays caused by unexpected down time and underperforming infrastructure.
- Hospital IT professionals can dedicate their time and energy to working with providers and employees on local technology solutions to fulfill your organization’s unique needs.

Strategic Transformation

Experienced cloud-based managed services providers can provide you with a customized strategy that leverages private cloud, public cloud, multi-cloud, and hybrid solutions to move your hospital’s infrastructure forward. The right partner can customize solutions for near-term and long-term needs, ensuring that your data is protected from cyberattacks, always backed up and, most importantly, always available when your organization needs it.