Overcoming the challenges of enterprise system migration

For Kettering Health Network, selecting the right solution has made all the difference.

By Jon Russell and Bill Hudson

Migrating to a new software platform is never undertaken lightly. And, when the platform being replaced is an interface engine that is being used across the enterprise within a large integrated delivery network (IDN) that is involved in the largest electronic medical record (EMR) implementation ever undertaken by the organization, it isn’t a decision that you even want to consider. But there are times when a major migration initiative is the only logical choice.

That was the conclusion we came to at Kettering Health Network (KHN) when a lengthy upgrade to the Sun Java Composite Application Suite (JCAPS) platform failed to meet our requirements for reliability and stability. The KHN includes more than 60 state-of-the-art facilities where more than 1,200 physicians serve a patient population in the Dayton, Ohio, area. We explored our options for the next phase of our implementation of the Epic Hospital Information System (HIS) that was scheduled to go live within five months at Kettering’s largest hospital, and we understood that we had just one opportunity to address the problems caused by the JCAPS interface engine if we weren’t going to effectively cripple the EMR implementation.

After an evaluation that included our current technology as well as two short-list competitors, we were impressed by the engineering savvy that InterSystems Corporation brought to the table for a proof-of-concept project. An internal team and InterSystems integration specialists recorded three distinct, complex interfaces in just one week and sketched out a strategy that could enable meeting our goal of recoding and testing all of the Epic interfaces using the InterSystems Ensemble rapid integration and development platform within a four-month window. As a result, Kettering selected InterSystems as our working partner for the migration effort. And, upon completion of a project that called for developing and implementing more than 150 interfaces, we can definitively say that the decision to face the challenges of enterprise-scale migration was not only correct, but has also provided Kettering with new-generation technology on which to build for the future.

It became clear very quickly that we had made the right choice. After more than two decades of managing integration initiatives, the Ensemble migration was accomplished more quickly and more successfully than any other project of this kind.

That’s a strong statement, but the migration results provide ample proof of its validity. Over a four-month period that ended in April 2011, our team completed Ensemble training, developed more than 150 interfaces, performed extensive testing and rolled out the new interfaces on a production basis. We have a very strong integration team and received support from the InterSystems Worldwide Resource Center whenever questions arose during this fast-track project. When questions came up, typical response time was no more than an hour, a turnaround rate that, in our experience, is not at all business as usual for most software vendors.

Following the initial migration, the integration team developed Ensemble-based interfaces for other hospitals in the KHN. By November, more than 200 interfaces had been rolled out, and we’re continuing the process of rolling out the Epic HIS to the rest of the KHN.

The conversion to Ensemble has been an unqualified success. We’re now evaluating new and proactive integration projects that we couldn’t realistically consider in the past. Ensemble has made Kettering more agile in terms of responsiveness to the providers in our IDN. And InterSystems’ track record of success in IDN implementations globally, complemented by a product family that includes the HealthShare strategic informatics platform as well as CACHÉ, Ensemble and active analytics technology, positions them as a potential partner to provide high value for future initiatives.

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