

Key Steps to A Successful Digital Pathology System Implementation

Robin Weisburger



THIS E-GUIDE WILL UNCOVER THE NECESSARY STEPS
and process to creating a project charter and managing the
implementation process.



A SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL PATHOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

depends upon careful planning and commitment. By working through the following steps, you will increase your chances of a successful system implementation within a reasonable timeframe defined by you and your project team.



INITIATING THE PROJECT: CREATING A PROJECT CHARTER FOR SUCCESS

The project sponsor, the project leader and the project manager should work together to fully define the project, the project team and the project timeline. Completing a project charter or summary will define the parameters of your project, keeping your team on track and focused.

THE PROJECT CHARTER OR SUMMARY SHOULD:

1 Identify the Project Stakeholders

- a. **PROJECT SPONSOR:** The sponsor is the individual driving the change, approving the project scope, timeline and the deliverables. S/he works closely with the team leader to ensure the project stays on track and that deliverables are met according to the timeline. A pathologist with a vision for how digital pathology and telepathology can elevate the quality and effectiveness of their practice is ideal for this role. S/he must be a champion for the project and be committed to its success. Without this commitment, other priorities may interfere, jeopardizing the project's success.
- b. **PROJECT LEADER:** The leader manages the project, sets the meeting agendas and runs the project meetings. S/he assigns tasks and coordinates off-line activities as necessary to ensure their completion. The leader should have a strong relationship with the sponsor and be able to influence others, engaging them in the project's success.
- c. **PROJECT MANAGER:** The project manager coaches the sponsor and leader to ensure that the project stays on track. S/he provides feedback regarding the project management process and provides resources and/or tools for managing the different aspects of the project as needed. Many organizations have a Project Management Department that can assign resources to assist a new project leader. The leader may also serve as the project manager with enough experience.
- d. **TEAM MEMBERS:** Make sure the critical players are involved from the start to ensure their commitment to the project. A project of this scope requires representation from your IT Department, the laboratory staff responsible for operating the system, the pathologist staff and the vendor of choice.
- e. **OTHER STAKEHOLDERS:** Individuals with a significant interest in the outcome of the project should be kept in the communication loop. Organizational leadership with an interest in telemedicine or senior IT leaders may well be interested in the project's progression and the impact it may have on organizational priorities.



2

Define the Project Scope

- a. What is the opportunity for improvement or problem that you are trying to solve? Are you implementing a basic digital pathology platform to maintain images for later use in education or research, or are you implementing a system that will support collaboration between pathologists or even organizations? What is your start point? Will researching the options for scanners and platforms be part of your project, or have you made your purchase decision and now need to plan the installation and implementation of your new system?
- b. What is your end point? Define your end point specifically to prevent “scope creep.”
- c. What are your measures of success? Utilization of your system is frequently a good measure of success, ex. percentage of pathologists using the system, number of slides scanned per month, etc.

3

Summarize the Business Case of the Project

Understanding for the importance of the project builds commitment to its success.

- a. Why is this project important now? Is your current system of managing microscopic slides or images becoming overwhelming or obsolete? Is there a demand for whole slide microscopic images from your pathologists?
- b. Does your project align with the strategic direction of your organization? If so, you may be able to gain senior leadership support for the project.
- c. What is the projected return on investment?

4

Define the Project Timeline

WHAT ARE THE PROJECT MILESTONES? Breaking the project up into key phases with defined timelines will help keep the project on track. Possible milestones might include:

- i. MONTHS 1-3: System acquisition and installation
- ii. MONTHS 4-5: Training of key staff and development of operational procedures
- iii. MONTH 6: System roll-out to include user training and go-live
- iv. MONTHS 7-9: Collaboration with an external regional practice

The Project Charter may Start with a Statement Similar to the Following:

There is an opportunity to improve “the management of microscopic images of surgical pathology slides” starting with “creating a whole slide image of a finished slide” and ending with “active utilization of whole slide images by staff pathologists for teaching, education, quality assurance activities and collaboration.” This project is important now because “our current slide management system is work intensive and risks loss of important patient material due to broken or lost slides.”

A Business Case Summary may Start with the Following:

A digital pathology platform provides pathology with resources that improve patient safety, expand our expert review services and enhance our professional and business relationships with other regional facilities. This initiative also places pathology in direct alignment with the strategic direction of our organization by promoting telepathology services with both our internal and external colleagues.

KNOWING YOUR PROJECT PARAMETERS ALLOWS YOU TO
better define your key stakeholders, your project timeline
and your business case.

NEXT ARE THE KEY STEPS TO MANAGING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DIGITAL PATHOLOGY SOLUTION:



MANAGING THE PROCESS

Planning and execution of the project are critical to its success. With conflicting priorities now the norm for most managers, a schedule with clear timeframes and deadlines provides a structure for success.

1 Draft a Project Plan

- a. The project charter is the first component of your plan.
- b. Based upon the milestones listed in your charter, create a detailed task list with due dates and assigned responsibilities. This list may be revised throughout the process as details become more evident.
- c. List the resources that will be required for the project's success. This section may feed into the identification of potential risks in the project charter.
 - i. Capital resources will include a whole slide scanner and an image server.
 - ii. Operational resources include user licenses, maintenance agreements, and personnel.
 - iii. Personnel resources include technical staff responsible for operation of your system and IT staff responsible for setting up the interfaces between your scanners, the server(s) and your communication platform, i.e. Corista DP3™.
 - iv. Other considerations include space requirements, networking resources and time.
- d. Identify the possible risks for success, and consider how those risks can be mitigated?
 - i. Consider funding sources and conflicting priorities for management. Are there other major initiatives that could pull resources from your project?
 - ii. You WILL meet resistance to change. Your physician champion needs to be able to support the change AND insist on staff utilization of the system.
- e. Identify funding sources. How will the project be funded? What different funding options are available?
 - i. Capital funding vs. lease options
 - ii. Operational funds
 - iii. Special project funding

2 Define the Communication Plan

- a. What information needs to be communicated?
 - i. Meeting agendas and notes
 - ii. Status updates
- b. To whom are you communicating the information?
 - i. Project team
 - ii. Stakeholders
- c. Who is responsible for communicating the information?
 - i. Project leader
 - ii. Project manager
- d. In what form are you sending the communications (ex. email, phone, etc)?
- e. What is the time frame for sending out communications?

COMMUNICATION PLANNING

- WHAT?
- WHO?
- HOW?
- WHEN?

3

Insist on Accountability

- a. Define the meeting schedule at the start of the process and adhere to it.
- b. The project leader sets the agenda, although input from others is encouraged.
- c. Assign responsibility for project tasks with a timeframe for completion. Project assignments, their responsibility and their timeline should be reviewed at the close of each meeting.

4

Be Disciplined — Do Not Get Distracted

- a. Set a meeting schedule and adhere to it.
- b. Whenever possible, send the project meeting agenda out to team members two business days in advance. This reminds them of the tasks for which they are responsible.
- c. Keep the project focused. Out of scope items should be placed in a “parking lot” to be addressed at another time.

5

Document the Work

- a. Provide meeting notes regularly documenting the progress reported at the meeting.
- b. Keep your task list up to date. Note completed items, pending items and any delays as well as the reason for any delays.
- c. Report progress regularly to the project team and external stakeholders.

6

Celebrate Milestone Achievements!!!

NOW THAT YOU KNOW THE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING

a digital pathology system successfully, **CONTACT US** to learn more about the benefits of implementing Corista’s award-winning digital pathology workflow solution.