

When healthcare systems first enter the market for clinical communication and collaboration solutions, they typically find two types of offerings: **point solutions** (department or role specific products solving one problem) or **platform solutions** (integrated application solving multiple problems across an entire system). Both types of offerings have their place in healthcare, but the industry is trending towards higher adoption of platforms, and for good reason. Here's why.

Point solutions have typically been used in niche applications, where the emphasis has been placed on quickly solving a specific problem within a specific department or function (i.e. *our nurses in the ICU department need a way to quickly and securely message each other*). Oftentimes departments or roles might have separate vendors for secure messaging, voice communication, and alert and schedule management systems. While implementation can be fast, this approach presents some long-term challenges for both the department and the system as a whole:

- Creates communication barriers by requiring staff to use another device or tool for communication outside their role or department
- Functionality not typically interoperable, meaning clinicians won't have access to all information necessary to make timely decisions
- May require on-premise servers, creating high IT burden

Platform solutions solve these challenges by allowing the healthcare system to standardize on one communication platform across the entire organization. All departments and roles within the organization can make use of one system for secure messaging, voice communication, alert management and even on-call schedules. Typically, these products also integrate directly with other clinical applications, giving providers direct access to key information at their fingertips. Maybe most importantly, all features provided by the application are native features—meaning they don't require integration with 3rd party vendors to function. For example—a nurse in the ICU department who needs to securely message the oncologist for clarification can do so with the same device she uses to receive patient monitor alerts and call her colleagues.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING A COMMUNICATION VENDOR:

1. Is the product designed for all clinical roles and departments?
2. Are all of our key communication needs covered by this product (secure messaging, voice calls, and alerts)?
3. Is the product's on-call schedule management functionality built natively into the platform, or does it rely on integration with another vendor's solution?
4. Does the on-call schedule management functionality allow role-based communication (i.e. messaging the Cardiologist On Call versus memorizing the specific name of the cardiologist on call).
5. Does the platform integrate with our other key clinical applications (PACS/Labs, nurse call systems, EHR)?
6. Is the product intuitive and easy to use? Will it work on all the devices used in our facilities (Android/iOS smartphones, dumbphones, WoWs, operator consoles and others)?

Identifying your health system's long-term needs, and including both clinical and technical decision-makers in the discussion, will help you determine the best solution for your team.



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