Healthcare requires a more clinical strategy when it comes to communicating.

A challenge health systems face when implementing a clinical collaboration platform is addressing professional – and specifically medical – communication. Users need to be educated on best practices with new communication technology because by its very nature, it is very different from communication in other, non-urgent industries.

With clinical collaboration, time is of the essence. Nurses, physicians and clinical staff are dealing with life-or-death situations where communication needs to be clear and concise. Extraneous texts, whether emojis or even the innocuous "thank you" is not necessary and in some cases, could be detrimental to real-time communication.

Healthcare is a 24/7 activity similar to other highly specialized and mission-critical industries such as fire, police and air traffic control. Each of these requires a specific way to communicate, with procedures and methods outlined very carefully. Verbal and text messaging are deliberately brief and to the point. Each incorporate specialized terminology such as codes such as "10-4" or "roger wilco."

This begs the question as to why health systems would implement new clinical collaboration tools and not train on how to properly use them. Users need education on how to use the technology, but more importantly, they need to understand how NOT to use these tools.

Clinical settings require that communication should not be social, should exclude non-work-related messages, and – as impolite as it may seem – should not include responses such as "thank you" or "okay." This latter habit is a hard one to get out of because we are ingrained to respond. But if a clinician has to stop to read a "thank you" text, that is time wasted not caring for a patient.

Health systems should implement regular audits of their communications, particularly after implementation. One of our customers ran reports on usage of Halo that gave their leadership team surprising results. First, there were a lot of emoji interactions in the texts. More troubling, employees were asking personal medical questions of the health system's clinicians. To combat these issues, the health system developed a more robust education program about what was appropriate and inappropriate communication, which cut down on improper usage.

The second thing that happened was that medical orders began to creep into secure texting, which The Joint Commission has prohibited. As this was a patient safety issue, the health system and their compliance department addressed this immediately and it was stopped. Continuing with regular audits, as well as training during on-boarding of new employees, the health system saw users move to more professional communication, and they were able to address any further issues with individuals on an as-needed basis.

Professional healthcare education can also be provided by vendors when implementing a clinical collaboration platform. As the health system reviews and manages its workflows, and how new technology can change processes, training prior to go-live provides users education on the best practices for using their new system. This teaches nurses, physicians and clinicians the best and most efficient way to use the technology to achieve efficient and reliable communications.