SELLING TO HEALTH SYSTEMS
Everything You Always Wanted to Know, but were too Afraid to Ask
As with many specialized services, EHR integration is technical, nuanced, and requires years of hands-on experience in order to truly master. Luckily, all Redox does is integrate digital health applications with EHRs, and we’re the experts on how to get projects done efficiently.

Part of being integration experts is having the technical skill to establish secure VPNs, configure interfaces, and monitor data feeds to ensure a healthy, viable connection. Before all the technical work can begin, though, you must first sell an integration project to a health system, something that requires a whole other skill set and knowledge base. Pitching an integration is no easy task, but the key is to possess a strong knowledge of the healthcare industry and enough finesse to represent projects as both lightweight and beneficial to the health system.

This guide will help you master the fundamentals of integration and answer the most common (and not so common) questions you’ll hear from your customers. We’re always here to help you throughout the process, but understanding integration in your own right will help you pitch your product, close the deal, and get to work faster.
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There are three parties at work during the process of selling your application: the health system you’re targeting, your organization, and Redox. A key thing to understand here is how these parties interact and also how sales cycles work at health systems. This is not something that is quickly or easily explained, but coming into a sales call or pitch with a genuine understanding of who you are selling to is absolutely critical.

With that in mind, please read this article which provides great insight into the history and current state of health system sales cycles.

The main takeaway is that many health systems are reluctant to implement new technology because doing so is resource intensive and often proves less beneficial to their organization than promised. What’s more, health systems (which tend to be older institutions) are still adjusting to the industry-wide shift to electronic health records. Though countless digital health solutions seek to help doctors as much as patients, many within healthcare are still getting caught up to speed with the digital age and can be hesitant to incorporate more technology into their workflows.

This means you have to be flexible, patient, and willing to work with people who may not share a common goal. It can be tricky, but understanding their perspective will help you get your project up and running.
HOW REDOX HELPS

Traditional point-to-point integrations create more problems than they solve—the connections are particular to one instance of an EHR and cannot interoperate with other systems. Each new connection requires new code to be written, and every project requires months of testing to meet each health systems specifications. Even after the project is done, every individual connection will require monitoring and technical support, and whenever an update is needed, all connections must be individually managed.

Our platform is radically different—our modern API exposes a single connection and standard for your application to build against once. Instead of changing how you send documentation for visits into Cerner, Epic, or any other EHR, you will always structure your results and send your messages in the same format via a single HTTPS connection. Code to our engine once, and you'll never need to install any enterprise software or build out custom interfaces, meaning not only does your scaling potential dramatically increase, but it becomes easier and more efficient to integrate as you grow.

As you scale to new health systems, we learn the nuances of your application and can move faster with each subsequent project. Furthermore, when you want to work with a health system we've already integrated with, the technical mapping we've completed at that site enables you to get your product live in a way that's nearly turnkey. Unlike point-to-point connections, our platform promotes easier data sharing by leveraging and building upon existing infrastructure.
Instead of having your team establish and support the connections to your customer’s on-premise EHRs, we handle all connectivity and maintenance to the health system. With no VPNs, SFTP, or other nasty acronyms to worry about, you don’t have to expand or dedicate staff to becoming a network security team—it’s all handled by our fully managed services.
One of our primary advantages is that our model is refreshingly efficient for health systems to implement. Unlike with point-to-point connections, they don’t have to manipulate messages in the interface engine or update web service configurations, because we’ll deliver messages to them however they'd like. This cuts weeks of work and testing for their IT Team—an average point-to-point interface project can take between 40-60 hours of health system IT resources, while an average Redox project requires only 10. Additionally, Redox has proactive monitoring and alerts built into our engine, so the health system can rest easy knowing the connections they’re creating are secure.

Lastly, unlike any other integration solution, Redox's industry-leading API can accommodate the inevitable changes that will occur in the healthcare space, be it an EHR update, change of system, or adoption of a new data standard like FHIR. Our hub-and-spoke model allows us to quickly make changes on an engine level that will quickly take effect within your application’s workflow, and our SaaS model means you are always covered with long term support and flexibility.

With more and more applications approaching health systems to integrate, having an application that requires minimal work and maintenance makes your solution lightweight and appealing. Furthermore, having Redox as an integration partner enables you to come to health systems with projects that are nearly turnkey.

All of this means that you can frame your integration project as an extremely lightweight for the health system’s IT team because the typical barriers of traditional projects don’t apply to you.
TALKING ABOUT THE PROJECT

KEY PLAYERS INVOLVED

To ensure that everyone is on the same page and referring to the same people, it’s helpful to know who’s going to be working on your integration project from each party involved. Here are the titles and roles of some health system employees who will be helping complete this project, as well as a few other key players involved.

**Health System Project Champion** – provides context for why the application is being installed and is the escalation point with project issues

**Health System IT Lead** – primary contact for IT department and project issues

**Health System Interface Analyst** – configures the interface to send/receive messages and sends test messages

**Health System EHR Analyst** – makes updates to the EHR if needed and assists with workflow testing

**Health System Network Analyst** – assists with VPN connectivity and troubleshooting

**Redox Project Manager** – provides project management support for the project and is responsible for Redox-owned tasks

**Application Lead** – provides application-level project management (e.g., development completion) and leads workflow discovery
AVERAGE CONNECTION TIME

For your first connection, we estimate that your first go live will occur 4-8 weeks after kick off. After the first project, our Customer Success team will have a replicable playbook for all of your future connections that will enable them to be more agile in subsequent projects.

A few of our enterprise customers have established dozens of connections can now create connections at new health system clients in as little as 10 days. Once you’ve connected to the Redox API, you’ll be set up to scale quickly, too.

TIMELINE

Every project will begin with a Kick Off Call. During this phone meeting, we’ll take the integration strategy we’ve developed together that leverages the existing feeds in place at the health systems and discuss how we’ll accomplish the actual integration project.

We’ll lay out a project management schedule and define each party’s respective tasks. After, we’ll field any security, compliance, and operational questions.
Our projected timeline includes external factors that may influence the actual duration, such as health system prioritization, availability of interfaces, or complexity of your application. However, you can tell the health system that the time from kickoff to go-live will take roughly 6 weeks and will follow the below trajectory.
# Health System Resource Expectations

Your health system will want to know how much time and what kind resources they’ll be dedicating to this project. Here’s a guide to help you provide some clarity around who will need to get involved on which tasks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>~ Hours</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Health system provides sample messages to Redox</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>Interface Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Set up secure VPN connection to Redox</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Network Analyst</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Configure messages to be sent from the health system to Redox across the VPN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interface Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Connectivity testing between the health system and Redox</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interface Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Functional testing between the health system and Redox</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Interface Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Test integrated workflow between Application, Redox, and the health system</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>Interface Analyst/ Super User</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Move health system interface engine configuration to production</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interface Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soft go live with Health System</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interface Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Go live support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interface Analyst</td>
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**Total Time:** 11.5—15 hours
You created an amazing product and are ready to sell to your health system, but how do you get someone to bite? Focusing on these key issues can make the difference between being passed over and landing that sale.

**Know Your Project Scope—be prepared to answer, “how much time and effort will this take from my team?”**

Health systems often have a different concept of what implementing a new application costs, and may tend to view it as a much larger project than it actually is. This is why one of our largest value propositions is that an implementation project typically takes 4-6 weeks with about 10-15 hours of time from their IT staff. Make sure you highlight this point and make it very clear that this project will be different.

When it comes to marketing and selling your product, two approaches stand out as having had the most success:

**Sell the benefit of your product as a stand alone first.**

While the ability to integrate improves and expedites both the adoption and realization of efficiencies, it’s rarely the only reason that a health system will choose your product.

**Start with a read-only integration scope.** Focusing on integration needs that only require the health system to send data to your application is typically less time intensive and stressful for the health system. This ensures you aren’t impacting end user workflows and requires minimal configuration changes on the health system side.
Be prepared to compromise—Flavors A + B + C might produce a hybrid that works for you.

Integration projects usually take some degree of compromise, and arriving at a solution that works for everyone involved will require flexibility and finesse.

For example, let's say you'd like to auto-create patients in your database and push back discrete data to the EHR. To do this, you would need to consume a Patient Demographics feed. To enable that to happen might take two steps:

**Step 1:** prevent your end-users from needing to create patients in two systems

**Step 2:** get information back into the EHR for consumption.

IT might say they can do Step 1, but Step 2 just isn't feasible... but they could consume a PDF report of the information in the EHR.

Be ready and flexible to work with what the health system can accommodate, and you'll have a better chance of selling your product.

**Clearly Define Your Integration Strategy**

Once you've gotten the health system interested in your product, you'll need to be able to articulate what integration looks like. Some organizations will want a detailed project plan and others will be satisfied just knowing that it's available. Play it safe by preparing yourself for both (the rest of this document will help you with this).
HELPFUL TERMS TO KNOW

**API:** An Application Programming Interface. You can think of an API like a waiter—you give them an order, they convert it into a meal, and brings it back to you. Our API takes down your request in whatever format you give, delivers that information to a different place, and brings it back what you requested in a different form.

**VPN CONNECTION:** A Virtual Private Network is a secure tunnel between Redox and the health system used to exchange HL7 (or any language) information.

**OUTBOUND INTERFACE MESSAGES:** interfaces originating from the health system and sent to the application via Redox.

**INBOUND INTERFACE MESSAGES:** messages originating from the application and sent via Redox to the health system.

**JSON:** the simple read format of information utilized by our API.

**DATA MODELS:** Data Models are the framework our API uses to enable third-party applications to read and write clinical data. All are standardized in JSON format. Redox handles all data mapping, translation, and connectivity to the health system, ensuring the developer experience remains consistent across all health system sites.

**HL7:** Health Level-7 refers to a set of international standards for transfer of clinical and administrative data between software applications used by various healthcare providers.

**WEB SERVICE:** Refers to when you can communicate with a web server using web protocols (e.g. HTTP or HTTPS). Redox is a Web API, which means it’s a system that communicates with other systems over HTTP(S). We can communication with health systems who have web services which are XML based.

**FHIR:** Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources is a draft standard describing data formats and elements and an Application Programming Interface for exchanging Electronic health records.

**BIDIRECTIONAL:** the ability to both read and write data. NOTE: Even if something is bidirectional, two feeds will be utilized.
READY TO SELL INTEGRATION?

We hope this guide has provided you a strong foundational knowledge of what integration is, how to think about selling your product to a health system, and how to discuss the actual project itself.

If you want to talk about selling to health systems further (or anything else integration related!), reach out to your Redox point of contact and we’d be happy to dive deeper.

ABOUT TO KICK OFF YOUR PROJECT?

Read our “Road to Going Live” white paper to get caught up on the more technical side of an integration project. We’ll cover the technical questions that need to be answered, who’s involved, and what makes for a smooth and successful project.

READ THE GUIDE »