**7 Keys to Achieving Success   
of Your RTLS Initiative**

*by Dr. Scott Leddy, Chief Medical Informatics Officer | Cook Children’s Healthcare System*

In my role as CMIO, part of my job is to identify new technologies that are going to be of value to our organization, but also to create the environment in which we can be successful in implementing these technologies, and truly utilizing them to the benefit of our patients, our care providers, and our organization.

In this article, I am sharing my key learnings to achieving success with Real-Time Location Systems (RTLS), which I implemented in various healthcare institutions for which I have had the privilege to work.

**Key #1: Set Measurements for RTLS Success**

You cannot claim a success if you don’t define what success means to your organization. You need to work with your executive team to establish a clear vision of what RTLS is going to do for you and agree on the expected return on investment (ROI) for this technology. I have to add that as someone who is a part of the executive team myself, I don’t really care how much something costs. What I care about is how much value does it bring back to the organization for that cost.

**Key #2: Establish a Clear Roadmap for an RTLS Deployment**

It is not uncommon that you will come up with 10, 50, or even 100 different projects and problems that can be solved with RTLS technology. However, in order to actually act on all of those opportunities you really need a clear roadmap of which use cases and in what particular order you want to implement them to get the fastest ROI and the best utilization of your resources.

**Key #3: Don’t Use Pilots to Test the RTLS Value**

It is important to understand that RTLS technology has a certain threshold by which it becomes useful. So often, when new technologies are presented to our organizations, we tend to say: “Well, let’s do a little pilot, maybe in the ED or one clinic, and let’s see if this is really going to do all these things a vendor claims it will.” That’s not going to work for you with real-time location technologies because the true value comes when you can “light up” the entire organization. Unless you can “see” your entire system, you will be missing a whole lot of benefits RTLS technology can provide. Additionally, the technologies have reached a point of adoption that it is easy to find out how they have performed in the real-world from other organizations that have deployed them and have years of experience with using them.

**Key #4: Plan for the Future, from the Start**

The Real-Time Technologies are becoming cheaper, faster, and better with each day. Therefore, you want to design your RTLS solution to accommodate this ongoing versatility and innovation. So don’t wed yourself to a company that offers one particular sensing technology or is very proprietary in nature. You want someone that can play nice with all the vendors and new technologies that are evolving in this space.

**Key #5: Think about RTLS as an Initiative, not a Project.**

What surprises a lot of organizations as they begin to think about the Real-Time Technologies is that you’re going to need to create an RTLS team. Very often there is a desire to think that “we can just make my bio-med guy do this a couple hours a week and he’ll get some help from the IT folks, etc.” I can assure you – this is really not going to set you up to be successful. You need to have a dedicated team, sometimes even augmented by external experts, that can put the time and energy into rolling out this technology, making certain that it’s supported properly and continually maintained in a fashion that proves it to be reliable to the organization. Otherwise you’re going to have some real challenges in moving the initiative forward.

**Key #6: Nurture the Change**

From my experience, the real challenge you’re going to have is the change management process – getting the people in your organization to embrace RTLS technology and use it to its maximum potential. That is going to take significant focus and work to be successful in that effort. You’re going to need to educate your staff on the role of RTLS, teach them how to use data to improve processes, and encourage them to stick to the new processes, when it is “just easier” to go back to the old ways of doing stuff.

**Key #7: Show Successes, Early**

To create excitement around RTLS initiative, you must demonstrate the value it brings to the organization. However, don’t only focus on hard dollar savings, such as avoided rentals or purchases. Ask your nurses how much time the system saves them, how much happier they are at work. And don’t wait for the fiscal year to end to report these results, share success stories often and early to increase the system adoption and create momentum for your initiative.

As you can see, ensuring the success of your RTLS initiative is not an easy task. It requires executive commitment, dedicated resources, and adoption by the staff on the floor – only then you can provide the value to your patients and staff and achieve tangible ROI to your organization.

***About Dr. Scott Leddy***

*Dr. Leddy is a medical informaticist and emergency medicine physician. He has been part of the design, implementation, optimization and value realization process for EHR systems, principally Epic, through 28 hospitals and hundreds of ambulatory clinics across 3 major health care systems, both academic and non-academic. He also has a significant interest and experience with leveraging Real-Time Location technologies in the healthcare environment.*