

7 File Transfer Challenges of Healthcare IT

WHITEPAPER





Introduction

You've seen the digital evolution that's taking place in healthcare. Organizations are constantly seeking to more efficiently and securely manage the proliferation and management of electronic health records (EHRs) and every type of digital file that relates to patient care.

You know plenty about the security risks to these files—and about government regulations such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) that seek to minimize these risks by establishing stringent standards for protecting sensitive patient data.

Today's healthcare organizations are often relying on outdated legacy systems—which make it more difficult than ever to maintain compliance with every federal, state and third-party regulation as you transfer files and perform other IT functions. The unique pressures that time-sensitive healthcare demands place on these systems are enormous.

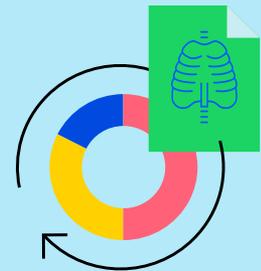
Make no mistake: the automated, integrated movement of files is the crux of the matter. And as we'll see, "business as usual" FTP and e-mail file transfer systems just aren't adequate anymore.

TRANSFERRING CLINICAL DATA FROM ONE FACILITY TO ANOTHER?

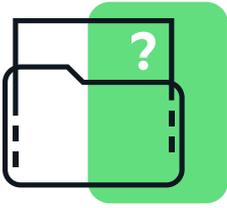
Sending rich-media medical files such as ultrasound video to an attending physician?

Large imaging files like MRIs or CT Scans? Or exchanging important data with external sources such as health plans, pharmacies, insurance companies, doctors' offices and Medicare? In every case, your proficiency at transferring files quickly and securely impacts the health of patients, the livelihoods of medical professionals, and the success of your healthcare organization.

And of course, the work involved in managing these systems is also a key factor in your own professional standing and well-being.



Drop-box-like solutions aren't the answer either, because they're designed for file sharing, not file transfer. Add the fact that demand for file transfers is exploding across the enterprise— putting even more pressure on strained resources—and it becomes clear that you're dealing with a serious and growing challenge.



There are legacy productivity and process problems, too. Ask yourself these important questions:

- **Has there been a significant increase in the sheer volume of confidential patient files your systems are handling? How about the complexity of the files?**
- **Is the challenge compounded by the use of cumbersome scripts?**
- **Even though your tasks may be “automated” batch jobs, is the scripting for file transfer job creation and execution proving to be time consuming and error prone? How about meeting Patient Health Information (PHI) logging requirements?**
- **Do you have difficulty determining when a file was transferred, where it went, and if it even got there? Do you sometimes have to spend hours or days searching?**
- **At times, is the scheduling of file transfer jobs a monumental challenge (for example, manually rescheduling every job when a password changes)?**
- **Do your end users sometimes circumvent IT and use unauthorized file transfer solutions that put confidential claims data, pharmacy records and patient information at risk?**
- **Given these everyday challenges, do you feel you’re already playing “catch up” when it comes to implementing the measures that are be required by landmark legislation such as the Affordable Care Act?**

HIPAA—THE COMPLIANCE MANDATE THAT’S SHAPING AN INDUSTRY.

This act of Congress is intended to preserve the privacy and security of personal health records. HIPAA requires that organizations prevent unauthorized access, alteration, deletion and transmission of electronically stored and transmitted health information.





Zero visibility with file transfers is a bad way to start your IT day.

You know the drill. You spend the first 90 minutes of the day staring at your screen like a zombie, trying to make sense of the errors, exceptions and problems that greet you every morning. This can often involve the futile task of trying to track file transfers as you seek to answer questions such as what clinical data was sent, where was it sent, was it received, and when and how did it get there? And right now, this very minute, what is the real-time status?

Think of the time and effort this can cost you—and how you can sometimes come up empty-handed. The problem is you have no visibility, or very little of it. Or you have to painfully pore through detailed log reports to find what you're looking for. You simply don't have the tools to monitor, manage and audit the transfer trail of files across your enterprise—a failing that means your supposedly "okay for now" file transfer solution is really woefully inadequate. And robust reporting capabilities? A dream, at best.

Your job is hard enough without having to contend with these blind spots and drawbacks. But things can definitely get worse—much worse—when the lack of visibility has security and compliance implications...



Everyone's demanding security and compliance, but nobody's giving you the resources to make it happen.

The federal government passes sweeping legislation like HIPAA and HITECH. State governments follow suit with mandates such as the Standards for The Protection of Personal Information of Residents of the Commonwealth (applicable in Massachusetts). The regulators oversee your organization as they enforce the laws. And your organization's leadership team promises to comply. But then...an over-eager end user who insists on an "easy, fast" workaround makes a totally avoidable PICNIC (Problem in Chair Not In Computer) mistake that leads to file security being compromised.

You're the one who's asked to fix the problem. And what a problem it is: If you can't produce the right files at the right time, or if you can't prove they were properly protected, your organization could be subject to millions of dollars in government fines and penalties, a battered reputation in the healthcare community, and a loss of trust by medical professionals, patients, and the public at large.



Stakeholder requests never seem to end— nor does your workload.

Ever wonder if your workload is really getting heavier, or if it just seems that way? Well, it is getting heavier. A quick look at a few statistics bears this out. According to a recent Aberdeen study, the volume of file transfers is increasing, on a yearly average, by 11%, the size of files by 7%, and the number of users transferring files by 6-9%. All while IT hiring goes up by a paltry 2%.*

Those averages are across all industries. Needless to say, certain healthcare organizations are seeing an escalation in file transfer demand that is even more extreme.



Lack of integration and centralization can be serious liabilities—with patchwork, home-grown systems usually to blame.

It's easy to get used to a lack of a centralized, unified solution set for file transfer. But it's never acceptable. It's inefficient, chaotic and needlessly confusing. You can feel like you're running in an endless maze.

Of course, it's not like your file transfer systems were created this way by design. It's the way initial systems were developed and introduced one at a time—one system in radiology, for example, and another one in obstetrics—with lots of home-grown improvisation and “band-aid” fixes along the way.

Needless to say, this cobbled-together patchwork is not the best way to ensure trouble-free file transfers that minimize the risk of disappearing files and exposed records. Instead, it would be far preferable if you could find a solution that consolidated file transfers into a single system across doctors, nurses, administrators, partners, applications and systems—enabling you to ensure fewer points of failure and guarantee simpler integration efforts.



It's hard to say goodbye to “good old” FTP, drop-box-like solutions and e-mail file transfers—but it sure is overdue.

These solutions feel like old friends. They've most likely been around your organization for quite a while—and you, and your end users, know them quite well. But plainly speaking, they just can't cut it anymore. Not in the changing IT environment in which you're now operating. Consider these limitations with which you've unfortunately had firsthand experience:

E-MAIL FILE TRANSFERS

- Limits the size of file attachments to 10MB or less—not enough to accommodate unstructured, multimedia formats such as ultrasound video files, audio files, images, and so on.
- Sending large files through email servers causes performance problems that affect reliability and file delivery.
- Multiple copies of large attachments can use up allocated storage and create storage management headaches.
- No visibility as to where files are—either for you or an auditor.
- Security and compliance are dependent on end user behavior—always a risky proposition.

FTP

- No inherent method for encryption during transport, leading to possible interception of sensitive or regulated files during transport.
- Manual process with no native means for automation and integration with business processes. To automate and integrate, you need the skills to develop customized scripts—a sizeable investment of time and resources.
- Files stored on FTP server stay there until they are removed.
- Account administration requires action by system administration every single time, whether for setup, deletion or change management. This can take hours or even days—slowing the transfer of important files.
- Do not feature the core elements of a superior file transfer system: connectivity, administration, automation and reporting. (see page 8)

SHARING VS. TRANSFER

There's a big difference between file sharing solutions and file transfer automation solutions, although the two are often confused. File sharing is for collaboration between individuals, whereas file transfer automation, addressed in this whitepaper, is for moving files, a crucial part of healthcare processes.

DROP BOX-LIKE SOLUTIONS

- These are file sharing solutions, not necessarily file transfer solutions. They're designed for collaboration, but do not have the management and infrastructure to facilitate file movement as a part of business processes.
- Built on lightweight infrastructure that often can't support enterprise level requirements for security, auditability, reliability and visibility.
- For some businesses and processes, the additional layer of storage management and administration is a hassle and unwanted expense.



Your productivity is being hurt by complex manual processes and a lack of automation— and did we mention custom scripting?!

Here's a continuation of the previous point. It comes down to the fact that you're probably compensating for your organization's lack of automation by devoting countless hours to complex manual file transfer tasks, laboriously writing code every time there's a change to business processes, and performing repetitive, tedious jobs such as partner on-boarding, and managing data and file exchange with partners.

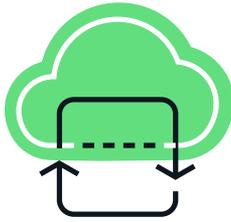
All of these responsibilities can chew up large chunks of your day. Chances are, they're the reasons your mission-critical file transfers are taking way too much time—to the dismay of just about everyone in your organization. And you can't really blame end users for being upset by the delays and calling you for clarification and updates—it's ultimately the health and well-being of patients that are being put at risk.



When end users go around you, it's like they're taking aim right between your eyes.

It's guaranteed: When there's no centralized, IT managed file transfer solution, your end users will turn to whatever tool offers them the greatest convenience. The downside is that convenience comes with a price—namely, an increased risk of security breaches and non-compliance. Furthermore, with the proliferation of mobile devices, the possibility of porous, easily-compromised security is magnified all the more.

What's needed, then, is a unified standard for all file transfers in your organization—an easy-to-use solution that integrates seamlessly with the tools your end users are already employing. But where do you find such a solution?



Managed File Transfer (MFT) helps today's healthcare companies meet compliance mandates and manage risk.

You're not alone in the challenges you face as you seek to maximize the effectiveness of your file transfer systems—and to meet government compliance regulations. Many other IT professionals in the healthcare industry are facing similar challenges and share in the pains you're experiencing.

The good news is that there is a solution—an enterprise-class Managed File Transfer (MFT) system—which allows you to meet your growing (and increasingly complex) file transfer needs. It can be delivered to your doorstep neatly and simply. And it enables you to transfer files reliably and securely, meet your all-important compliance requirements, eliminate manual workflows, and provide end users with an IT-approved solution for sending files. MFT also guarantees you visibility and control over all file transfer activities, enables you to confidently meet your SLAs, and provides you with easy implementation/on-boarding.

Specifically, with MOVEit from Progress you'll receive four vital benefits that are unavailable with the all-too-common array of legacy systems:

- Connectivity ensures that end users can access the system via mobile devices, email, or a web browser. IT retains control yet workers maintain high levels of productivity through easy-to-use, flexible access.
- Administration so that you can easily set up, control, and manage your organizational file transfers, provision users/accounts easily, and onboard partners and control access.

FEWER ERRORS. FASTER RESOLUTION

Research indicates that organizations that adopt MFT have, on average, **26% fewer errors**, exceptions and problems with file movements.

What's more, they resolve the errors **4.8 times faster** than those that do not.*

Very impressive figures—and all the more reason to take decisive action.

* Move Away from the Tangled, Digital "Do-It-Yourself" Approach to Moving Files:
Aberdeen Group Webinar, December 2013



- Automation to make sure that files route appropriately according to key business processes and they integrate into other applications for scheduling and routing.
- Reporting for enterprise visibility and control, compliance and governance and to easily provide reports for auditing and regulatory inquiries.

How will MOVEit impact you and your organization? For starters, you'll be better able to meet compliance requirements, which greatly reduces pressure on you. You'll increase productivity and efficiency within IT and all across your organization. Costs will be reduced. And the quality of your patient care will be enhanced— thanks to faster, more secure file transfers that are vital to a streamlined workflow and processes that support your entire team of healthcare professionals.



For a free trial of MOVEit Transfer, please visit:
www.ipswitch.com/forms/free-trials/moveit-transfer

About Progress

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