

Radiology Revamp Results in \$2+ Million Annual Gains



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Problem to Solve

A major division within the radiology department of a large health care system was woefully underperforming. Rather than receiving the timely care they needed, patients instead encountered long delays to schedule appointments. Based on national averages, the division was seeing far fewer patients than expected.

The health care system's leaders knew the division needed an operational revamp to improve patient satisfaction and increase capacity. However, the radiology department lacked an in-house resource with the qualifications and objectivity to identify and implement the improvements needed. The health care system brought in Freed Associates (Freed) to partner to address this problem, knowing Freed's expertise in utilization improvement and process optimization.

Strategy and Tactics

The Freed team started by assessing the division's current performance. Interviews with key personnel, observations of department processes, and data collection painted a picture of the current state of the department and its redesign needs. This current-state assessment highlighted for both the health care system's leadership and

frontline team the challenges that could be tackled in this effort.

Resolving the division's utilization challenges, and establishing long-term operational success, began with Freed coaching frontline team members about problem-solving. Asked to help solve the challenge of patient delays, staff members came up with a new handoff process that eliminated unnecessary communication and improved the patient experience. This focus on problem-solving also led to a higher degree of staff engagement in the new processes being designed and implemented.

The greatest challenge uncovered during Freed's current-state assessment was with the division's scheduling templates. The original design of these templates did not allow for a predictable volume of patients throughout the day, which created capacity issues and staffing challenges. Freed partnered with key stakeholders, including physicians, to create several options for new templates that would better meet patient demand and move the division toward higher utilization. Once the division's leaders signed-off on the new template design, implementation began.

During this project, the division was also slated to move to a brand-new building. Freed knew that this move would be the perfect opportunity to implement the new scheduling template design. With Freed's guidance, the division implemented all necessary template improvements and opened its doors with a completely revamped scheduling and new processes to support the system.

Results and Conclusion

Through Freed's involvement, the radiology division achieved game-changing operational and financial improvements, increasing daily patient volume 36%, decreasing patient wait time for an appointment by more than 50%, and gaining at least \$2 million in additional recurring patient revenue per year. Crucially, all this work was accomplished without interrupting patient scheduling nor adding or laying off any staff.

Freed's focus on involving staff in the improvement efforts had the desired results, with a higher degree of staff buy-in and engagement than before the project began. In fact, one staff member became so involved with helping develop and execute operational improvements that this staff member applied for and was hired as the new manager within the department. The health system's leadership is thrilled to have a higher-performing radiology division which is better able to serve the needs of patients, while also enhancing the system's revenue and reputation.