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Day in the Life – Applications for Healthcare Facilities

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Understanding how intelligent building systems and hospital IMIT systems interact to create smart workflows can be a challenge. Capturing the various systems and workflows that contribute to an outstanding patient and staff experience is complex in any hospital project, but can be particularly challenging on Alternative Funding Procurement (AFP) or Public-Private Partnership (P3) projects, where the proponents are evaluated on how well their overall design meets the future needs of the organization.

Angus Connect often uses Day in the Life (DITL) Scenarios to supplement more detailed technical specifications and to provide a user-based perspective of the various design elements that contribute to an outstanding patient-centred experience. A scenario will follow a typical patient as they move through a healthcare journey, with a particular focus on how the spaces and systems assist in creating a more streamlined experience, improving safety and ensuring a positive patient experience.

Day in the Life as both a planning and specification tool

Day in the Life scenarios are commonly used by architects to provide a view of how the facility will impact the experience of a typical patient. At Angus Connect, we believe that the Day in the Life can also be used to demonstrate a patient's interaction with technology and how that can have a positive impact on their journey. A carefully considered Day in the Life scenario not only documents the interactions, workflows and design elements that contribute to a patient's experience, but also demonstrates real-world application of the strategic goals and priorities of an organization.

Working through this exercise helps clinicians and hospital teams test different scenarios within the context of their new space. It can also identify how workflows need to be modified to accommodate opportunities and challenges in the new environment or where gaps might exist in planning. It also provides more clarity for bidding teams with respect to the intended functionality of systems and how they will work together to achieve the hospital's goals and priorities. This can strengthen the more technical specifications as part of an AFP/P3 redevelopment project.

Technology as a part of Day in the Life

If the intent is to capture the impact of design decisions on care team, patient and family experiences, then as technology plays an increasingly important role in these experiences, it makes sense to include these systems in the Day in the Life exercise. Often, new spaces bring new challenges – such as private rooms which put patients further from nursing stations and increase travel distances – which can often be addressed partially through strategic support of technologies, such as deploying mobile devices which allow nursing staff to spend more time at the bedside.

Not only does the Day in the Life get clinicians thinking about how technology will fit with their future workflows and spaces, but when this exercise is done as part of the planning process, it can assist in making sure that the right functionality is specified for the systems to be procured through the project. This increases value for money and the likelihood of successful adoption once the new systems are in place. Keep in mind that the Day in the Life is intended to supplement, not replace, the technical specifications for technology systems.

Key considerations for merging Technology Strategic Planning with Day in the Life

At a high level, technology planning needs to begin very early in the design process, preferably at or before the functional programming stage. Organization priorities directly drive key decisions (such as centralized or decentralized registration), and have a substantial impact on functional programming, technology systems planning and organizational workflows. This principle also applies to Day in the Life programming, in order to ensure that the development of each scenario considers the technologies throughout the process rather than adding them as a layer at the end.

If a technology strategic plan has been prepared, then this will form the basis for the technology portion of Day in the Life planning; if not, additional research and consultation will be required to define and document the organizational priorities. Typically, technology strategic directions can be loosely categorized as follows:

1. **Patient Experience:** improving how patients experience their care journey, such as reducing wait time, increasing transparency, promoting access to health information

2. **Care Quality:** increasing the quality of care received by patients, such as measures that support better care team coordination, access to health information

3. **Safety:** reducing safety events for patients, family and staff, often addressing specific organizational concerns, and possibly including concerns such as violent patients, falls, infection exposure, negative outcomes

4. **Efficiency:** improving clinical time at the bedside, more streamlined communication, reducing capital and/or operational costs, theft prevention, automating certain workflows

Once the strategic priorities have been established, select key workflows and experiences that highlight the strategic priorities, focusing on the experience rather than the technical details.

Since the Day in the Life is typically written from the patient perspective, scenario planning should start with the desired patient and family experience as they move through their care journey. What contributes to their experience? What are their priorities? What are their expectations? Define key aspects of the experience

that might differ from similar organizations or that make this experience stand out, and consider how technology supports the process. Ensure these experiences flow smoothly with the story of the scenario.

Second, consider how the staff contributes to the patient experience, and what the key aspects of staff experience might be. What are the staff and hospital goals? How do these goals fit with the current and future care delivery models? Will new spaces create challenges that were not present in older spaces (i.e., larger units that mean nurses need to travel further to reach their patients)? Also consider the rate of change and adoption of new technologies, spaces and workflows – how much technology is currently involved in care processes, and how will this change in the future? The Day in the Life may not directly address all of these items, but the answers will help clinical and technical teams think through the actual functionality of technology systems, including change management planning and how they will be used.

It is important to remember throughout this process that the Day in the Life is intended to supplement the technical specifications rather than replace them. Highlight the "why" rather than the "how" or 'what", and focus on how the user experience is affected by workflows and events through the patient journey. During the longer procurement periods typical of AFP/P3 projects, ensure that the Day in the Life is periodically validated, both with respect to alignment with other disciplines and with evolving clinical needs.

What makes a great Day in the Life Scenario?

Writing a great Technology Day in the Life scenario is the result of attention to three major areas:

1. Technical Details: Avoid using overly technical language and details, as this interrupts the flow of the scenario and does not add to the value of the exercise. Include only technical information which is relevant to the patient; technical details should be specified elsewhere.

2. Technical Alignment: Ensure there is alignment between the functionality of technology showcased in the Day in the Life and the project specifications. Technical functionality appearing in the scenario but not included in technical specifications is a common cause of confusion for those bidding on projects; similarly, functionality that cannot be achieved due to technical limitations or lack of availability on the market should be avoided.

3. Coordination: the Day in the Life will have the most benefit if it has been coordinated well with other disciplines, such as functional programming and architecture. Just like in a physical facility, technology in a Day in the Life scenario should be planned along with other elements and woven seamlessly into the overall patient journey.

Most importantly, clinical and technical teams should be involved throughout the development of the Day in the Life scenarios, in order to ensure that the strategic directions are maintained, and that the scenario remains both clinically and technically intact.

Conclusion

Through our experience on a variety of hospital construction projects, Angus Connect has found Day in the Life scenarios to be an invaluable method of capturing and validating users' expectations when it comes to technology systems. It has been a valuable tool for both planning and specification as part of large AFP or P3 projects, particularly for user-facing systems with a substantial impact on workflows and experience. It is important to remember that it is intended to augment rather than replace technical specifications and, as such, should focus on the impact to the workflows and patient experience within the framework of the organizational priorities. Early involvement from both clinical and technical teams is critical in order to ensure the Day in the Life remains clinically relevant and technically accurate.