

As our society continues to move toward healthcare's vision for a national health information network, the need for digital methods of dictation/transcription grows, and the use of back-end speech recognition technology (SRT) continues to gain momentum in replacing traditional transcription. Within this process, we have seen how the role of healthcare documentation specialist has changed to that of SRT editor. In order to be an effective SRT editor, it takes the medical knowledge, training, and an eye for detail that HDSs already possess, but it also takes enhanced critical thinking skills, focus, and concentration to ensure a quality outcome. While variability of technologies and originator's dictation habits impact the level of accuracy achieved through the process of voice to text, it will be the SRT editor's ability to successfully interpret what the eyes see against what the ears hear and the brain knows that will produce desired results.¹

Back-end speech recognition (BESR) has been recognized by the medical community as "the technology" for creating healthcare documentation. BESR has been promoted as a technology tool to help improve documentation turnaround times and decrease overall costs. Many healthcare organizations have successfully implemented BESR programs and have achieved their desired goals. Other healthcare organizations have struggled to attain the promised goals, resulting in failed savings, low staff morale, and a negative impact on quality in patients' healthcare records. This has given BESR mixed reviews.

How did the organizations that have had successful implementations and are highly satisfied with the results achieve that? Successful organizations have a clear understanding of their needs and how BESR will fit into their overall processes for healthcare documentation creation. A comprehensive Request for Proposals (RFPs) spells out their needs concisely. Healthcare documentation managers work closely with their IT departments to identify everything that needs to be included in the RFPs. Realistic goals are clearly defined in conjunction with senior management. Key individuals in each organization are involved in all phases of planning and implementation. They network with other healthcare organizations that have implemented BESR. They also understand that not all vendors are alike, so they invite demonstrations from a number of vendors and take time to examine what is available and how each platform may best fit their overall needs and goals.

Once a vendor is chosen, successful organizations establish a close working relationship with the vendor to develop the best possible implementation plan with a clearly defined timeline and assigned responsibilities. Support contracts are developed that spell out both the organization's and vendor's responsibilities to achieve a successful implementation and for ongoing support of BESR.

It cannot be overstated how important staff training programs are when transitioning healthcare documentation specialists (HDSs) from traditional transcription to BESR editing. Editing requires a set of skills very different from, and in addition to, the skills required for traditional transcription. Successful organizations understand the importance of training and put in the effort, knowing this investment in their HDSs will help their learning curve and yield the best outcomes, saving time and money in the long run. Training, however, is not once-and-done. Ongoing feedback and helpful editing tips are necessary to achieve both individual and organizational goals.

The development of appropriate productivity and compensation models for BESR editing also is not a once-and-done process. Successful organizations carefully consider these models and their options. Oftentimes it is assumed that production will double in a relatively short period of time and no allowances are made for the transition and learning curve that is part of moving from traditional

¹ Sims, Lea M; McSwain, Rebecca; Wall, Kristin. *The CMT Exam Guide: A Walk Through the Blue Print*. Modesto: AHDI, 2011.

transcription to back-end speech editing. Additionally, various factors influence individual productivity outcomes. For example, more productive staff starting at higher production levels will have less increase in their already high productivity than the increases that will be seen for less productive staff. Evaluation of the productivity standards and compensation packages must be done on a regular basis; changes may be necessary as productivity improves. To maintain staff morale and a good company culture, it is important to be as transparent as possible.

Organizations that are successful also realize the importance of involving their medical transcription service provider (MTSO) early on, even if they only outsource a portion of their healthcare documentation and even if one of their goals is to reduce outsourcing. This business relationship is vital, as MTSOs often have experience with a number of vendors and can offer valuable perspectives on various platforms.

This toolkit draws on the experiences of numerous healthcare organizations that have successfully implemented back-end speech recognition, as well as some that have not been as successful. We have also included insights from well-known vendors with a proven record of success in BESR implementation.

In summary, successful implementation of BESR is dependent upon a carefully orchestrated plan of action from the beginning. Ongoing measurements of results are monitored in the post go-live environment. When challenges arise, successful organizations act promptly, meeting those challenges and fixing problems as soon as possible for continued best results. Wise implementation of BESR systems can lead to increased productivity, improved turnaround, decreased costs, and a satisfactory new production environment for the entire healthcare documentation team.



Founded in 1978, the Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity (AHDII) is the not-for-profit association representing the individuals and organizations in healthcare documentation. AHDII's purpose is to protect the integrity of patients' health information through continuous workforce development and the support of practitioners and industry partners. www.ahdionline.org

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