RelayOne

Surgical Services Research: Insights for 2022

Despite significant investments in sophisticated technologies and state-of-the-art operating room environments, surgical care team coordination issues still plague hospitals, until now.

Executive Summary:

As health systems look to recover from the myriad of challenges the global pandemic threw at them, many leaders are turning their attention to one of their largest sources of revenue – surgical services.

Surgeries represent more than 60% of most hospital's revenues. As COVID-19 brought virtually all elective surgeries to a halt for a period of time in 2020 and reduced volume and throughput in 2021 due to staffing challenges, a backlog of surgeries was created and the revenue they generated was delayed or lost. Many hospitals are still working through their backlogs as they now also try to contend with staff shortages and healthcare worker burnout.

The inefficiencies that have challenged surgical care coordination teams for decades are also being exposed as a major barrier to optimizing operating room utilization. As a result, many healthcare leaders are kicking off initiatives to improve OR performance to help recoup lost revenues, retain qualified staff, and increase the efficiencies of their surgical care teams.

To better understand the current state of operating room performance, RelayOne, a provider of surgical care team coordination solutions, recently commissioned In90group Research to conduct an independent study of 100 health system leaders.

The purpose of this paper is to share insights from the research in hopes of helping surgical care team and health system leaders make more informed decisions as they seek initiatives to improve the performance and efficiency of their operating rooms in 2022.

Research Findings:

100
HEALTH SYSTEM LEADERS

98%
ORS COULD RUN MORE OPTIMALLY

74%
SURGICAL CARE COORDINATION MUST BE IMPROVED

Understanding the Top Challenges

The research study revealed that the vast majority (96%) of respondents felt that their operating rooms could be running more optimally. In addition, 74% felt that coordination among surgical care teams was not optimized.

The research also sought to understand the sentiment hospital leaders felt about the performance of Surgical Services. To do so, respondents were given a choice of negative and positive descriptors. The top three most popular words used to describe their operating room environments were negative. In fact, the least popular word chose was "optimized."
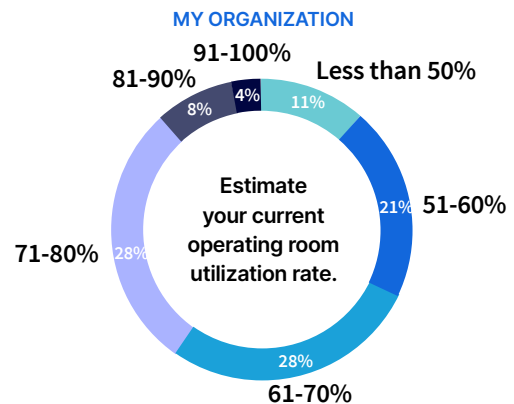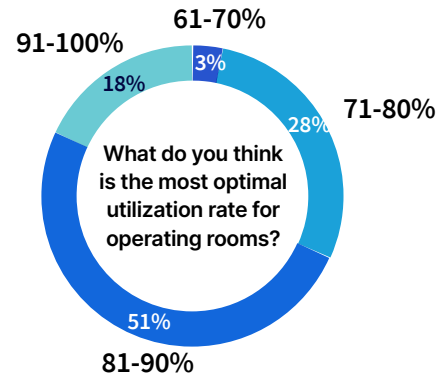
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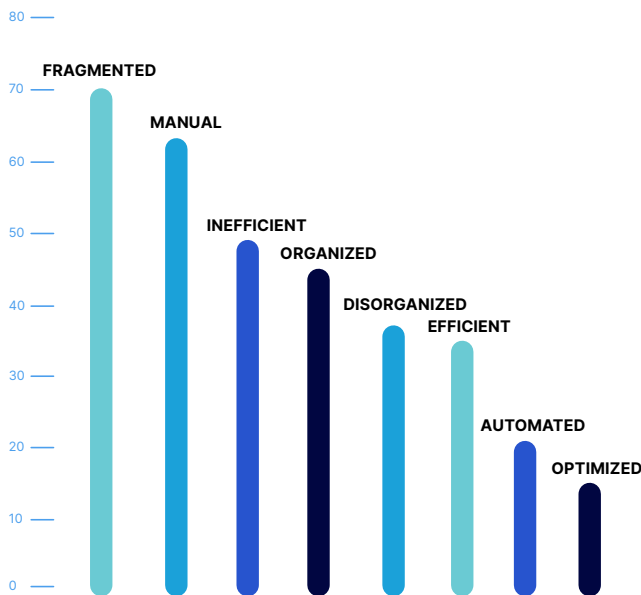
Setting the Goal

When asked what leaders thought the optimal utilization rates should be, more than half of respondents thought a utilization rate of 80-90% was the ideal target. However, when asked to estimate where their OR utilization rates were today, only 12% of organizations reported that they are reaching that ideal goal.

OR utilization rates are 20-30% lower than most hospital leaders believe they should be.

What do you think is the most optimal utilization rate for operating rooms?

MY ORGANIZATION

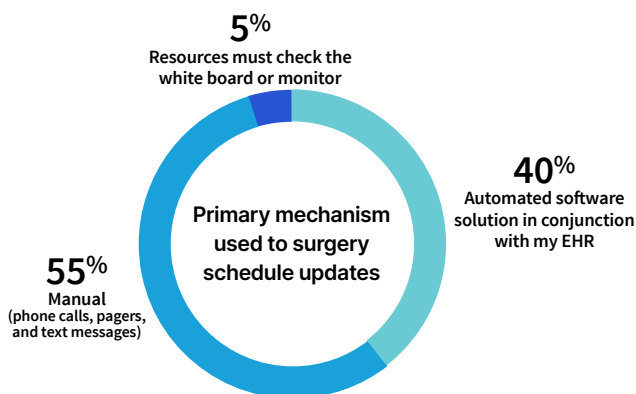Estimate your current operating room utilization rate.

Acknowledging that there is much room for improvement, 77% report that they are planning to start an initiative to help optimize the use and efficiencies of their operating rooms in the near future.

Let's take a closer look at the root causes of these challenges and their impact to better understand how leaders can begin to think about solving them.

The Root Cause

Digging into the cause of these challenges is an important first step before health system leaders can truly begin to solve the problem. In any given surgery, there can be 15-20 different team members who must be on the same page in order for the procedure to run on time and smoothly.

The research reveals that many hospitals are using outdated communication mechanisms and inappropriate software to coordinate the many moving parts of an effective surgical team, which essentially is setting the teams up for failure. In fact, more than half (55%) of survey respondents still depend on phone calls, pagers and text messages to keep everyone up to date. Many hospitals have call centers of people who are responsible for calling care team members with updates, resulting in wasted resources.

5%
Resources must check the
white board or monitor

40%
Automated software
solution in conjunction
with my EHR

**Primary mechanism
used to surgery
schedule updates**

55%
Manual
(phone calls, pagers,
and text messages)

Of the 40% who claim to use automated software solutions, 55% of those people depend on their EMR system, which leaves all of those team members who don't have access to the system in the dark.
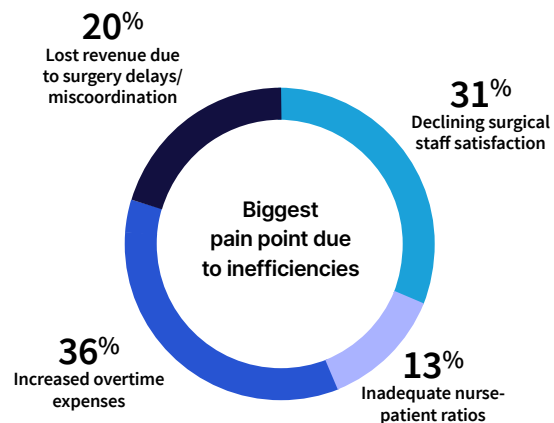
Plus, EMR systems were not built for the purpose of keeping large, disparate care team members up-to-date in real-time on operating room schedules. For those who don't depend on their EMR system, they are often forced to use solutions that require access to a patient's personal health information (PHI) and put the hospital at risk for HIPAA violations.

Another 5% reported that they require the resources to check a white board or facility monitor to track schedules. This is the most inefficient means, given that resources have to leave their work environments and be physically present to know if a surgery has been delayed or even canceled, dramatically impacting their productivity.

It is imperative that health systems identify new solutions that can keep the entire care team up to date without exposing PHI.

The Resulting Impact

Surgical care team and operating room inefficiencies are having a meaningful impact on health systems. More specifically, 87% say they are missing out on revenue opportunities due to the inefficiencies, and this comes at a time with recouping lost revenue from stalled elective surgeries is critical for most health systems.

20%
Lost revenue due
to surgery delays/
miscoordination

31%
Declining surgical
staff satisfaction

**Biggest
pain point due
to inefficiencies**

36%
Increased overtime
expenses

13%
Inadequate nurse-
patient ratios

Sixty-four (64%) say they are experiencing staff shortages among their surgical care teams, and 36% say their biggest pain points associated with these shortages are increased overtime expenses and another 31% say this is driving further reduction in surgical staff satisfaction. All of this comes at a time when the demand for elective surgeries is surging, causing more delays for patients and higher pressure for remaining surgical staff members.

When asked what the most urgent issues their teams are hoping to address in the next 12-18 months, the top issues were similar among both business and technical leaders:

42% | *of business leaders claim that improving operational efficiencies is their number one issue*

36% | *of technical leaders claim that realizing cost efficiencies is their number one issue*

Other top issues they are looking to address:

32% | *Improving patient and user experience*

28% | *Tackling staff shortages*

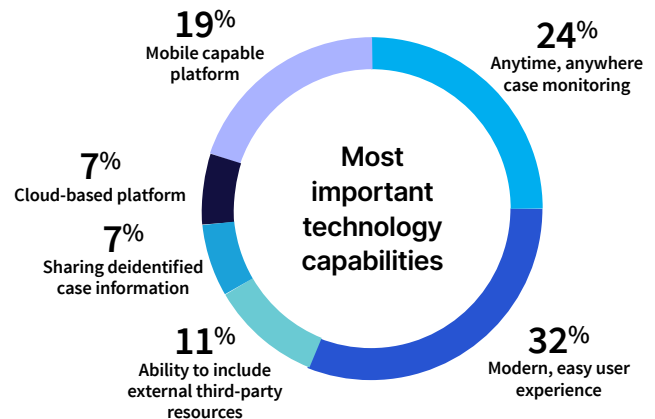**21%** | *Protecting PHI and infrastructure*

17% | *Recouping lost revenue due to the pandemic*

As leaders consider initiatives to improve the performance of their operating rooms and surgical care teams, the survey asked both business and technical leaders what their top requirements were for operating room optimization technology purchases. The top-mentioned requirements reflect the dynamic, disparate and fast-paced environment of today's surgical care teams:

- 32% say a modern, easy user experience
- 24% say anytime, anywhere case monitoring
- 19% say mobile-capable platform

What's Most Important

19% Mobile capable platform

24% Anytime, anywhere case monitoring

7% Cloud-based platform

7% Sharing deidentified case information

Most important technology capabilities

11% Ability to include external third-party resources

32% Modern, easy user experience

A Path Forward: Fast. Easy. Simplified.

Innovative technology solutions like those from RelayOne present the opportunity to achieve some of the strategic goals for surgical services in 2022. Surgical care coordination improvements through technology can bring increases in on-time first case starts, fewer delays, fewer cancellations and faster room turn times. And they may seem like small changes, but can lead to big returns for surgical care teams.

For more information about how your organization can experience similar benefits, contact RelayOne at www.RelayOne.com or info@relayone.com.