



# **The Top 3 Problems With Optimizing Home Health Software**



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Whether you have years of experience in the home health industry or are a new startup, one of the most important decisions to ensure the success of your agency is the software you choose.



There are two basic delivery models for home health software.



OLD MODEL

**SERVER BASED**



NEW MODEL

**SAAS**

OLD MODEL

## **SERVER BASED**

The older server-based model installs the software on a server that is owned, operated and maintained by the agency.

The agency, or its information technology staff, is then tasked with uploading any updates or fixes to the software.

## NEW MODEL

# SaaS

The newer and more prevalent model is called SaaS, software as a service. SaaS is a method of software delivery and licensing in which the software is accessed online via a subscription rather than bought and installed on individual computers.

The SaaS model is far superior to the older model. Following are a few advantages:

### .01

Fixes, or “patches,” are immediately effective.

### .02

Better scalability to work for agencies of any size.

### .03

Updates, including necessary regulatory changes and enhancements, do not require agency to install.

### .04

Reduced need for IT staffing and saving on capital expenditures for servers.

### .05

Easier installation and startup.

Unfortunately, the reality is that regardless of which model you choose, both methods of software delivery fall far short of what agencies actually need for a variety of reasons.



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The challenges encountered in each of these areas are interconnected and often compound the frustrations of end users.

# Let's look at the Top 3 Problems With Optimizing Home Health Software.

The core problems are:



Software Implementation,  
Training and Support.



Software  
Operation.



Software  
Reporting.

The challenges encountered in each of these areas are interconnected and often compound the frustrations of end users. All too often, agencies find out much later that these problems were intentionally not addressed during the software demonstration and that others were addressed in a misleading or cursory way.



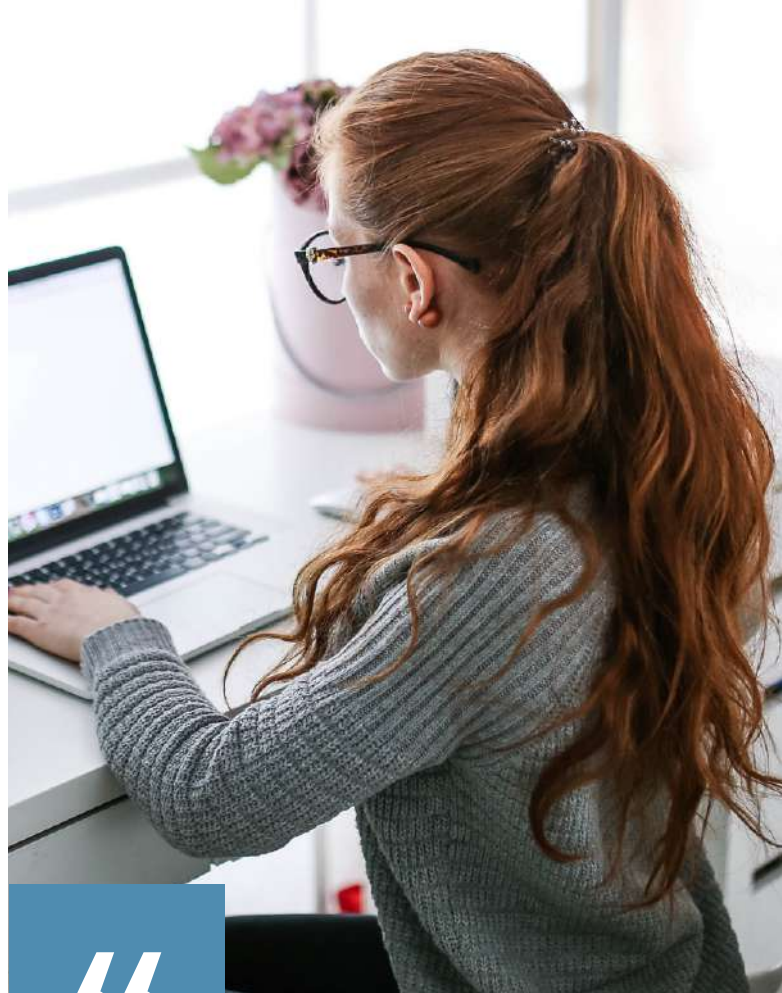
PROBLEM 1

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# Software Implementation, Training and Support

The statement “training is simple” is worse than misleading. Regardless of the software you choose, a real understanding of how it works comes only by using it. If you are considering a change in software, a great request of potential vendors is to ask for a walkthrough of their implementation processes. Because each agency and each individual in an agency is unique, it’s important to recognize that we all have different learning styles. Therefore, it is important that the software vendor have a variety of tools at their disposal to offer without excess associated cost. Not unreasonably, trainers should understand more than just the software operation; they must have home health knowledge in order to understand the agency’s point of view and needs.

The best software handles complicated processes in a simplified manner. The sophistication involved in meeting current regulatory and payer requirements in a simplified manner, however, is not simple. This is the beginning of the problem with home health software. Almost every agency needs something additional or “above and beyond” the basic hosting and access to the software. Almost every agency needs additional, specialized help in one area or another related to software. These areas may become apparent during implementation or they may become an issue later with the loss of a key employee.



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Additionally, everyone claims to have the best software support. So what would this reasonably look like? You would immediately speak with a person and not be assigned a “ticket.” Up-to-date training materials would be readily available without having to speak to an individual. Training materials would exist in a variety of formats. Support personnel would be able to answer user questions regardless of whether the issue was due to software deficiencies, user error, user ignorance of the industry or user ignorance of the intended software operation.

Product training varies by company and can be any combination of online videos, hardcopy manuals, online, real-time remote video conferencing or on-site training. Obviously, your agency will have a method that suits your needs and time constraints better than others, but regardless of the training method employed, the most important question to ask is whether the individuals conducting the training understand the needs of your agency.

Inadequate or incomplete training results in a failure to understand the software. This failure, in turn, leads to unexpected costs and potential lost revenues. These financial impacts increase exponentially when the individual “trainers” who teach software functionality have no actual industry experience, little general knowledge of the industry and zero day-to-day operational history within an agency setting!

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Ironically, despite this lack of exposure to and familiarity with home health, it seems that every SaaS provider promises the “best” support in the industry. Surely, they can’t all be the best.

The less-confident and less-IT-experienced staff require more training time, time spent on the phone holding for support to receive explanations or solutions, and time communicating with support staff, who may understand the software but often do not understand the needs and goals of the end user.



## PROBLEM 2

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# Software Operation

The creation of the disparity between what is advertised and the reality of what is purchased begins with the initial demonstration of the software. Demos are frequently given by members of a sales force who have the ability to “seal the deal” and who can often mislead the buyer by oversimplifying processes, skipping crucial process steps and, most frequently, by explaining processes rather than actually performing them. The after-sale reality of completing tasks such as billing primary or secondary payers, e-file creation, remittance posting and A/R reporting is, all too often, a source of buyer remorse. Similar gaps are frequently discovered in other operational areas such as clinical and regulatory compliance, system flow and reporting.

If an agency purchases a software that is advertised for home health providers, shouldn't their trainers know what a 485 is? Shouldn't a system designed for home health flag a user when a patient record is missing a Face-to-Face or a primary diagnosis code is not allowed under PDGM? A common problem with software operation is that the software doesn't do what it was “sold” to do. A common corollary with existing software is that the agency doesn't understand how to operate the software to work as needed. The former is caused by deception and the latter by poor training.



A common corollary with existing software is that the agency doesn't understand how to operate the software to work as needed. The former is caused by deception and the latter by poor training.

When your software doesn't work as it should, does your software vendor care? Unfortunately, if the answer is "no," you are left with little option but to change software. When your staff doesn't know how to operate your software, does your vendor care? A lack of understanding can be caused by staff turnover, poor training, poor training materials or a failure of staff to read published updates. If it doesn't matter to your software vendor, it is likely to result in an expensive problem. Incorrect documentation, time-consuming workarounds, additional high-cost training fees or lost or uncollectible revenue are all possible repercussions.

When a major regulatory change such as PDGM requires that you operate differently from how you did in the past, you are completely reliant on your vendor to put out a timely new product or enhancements to the existing application to allow you to operate successfully. In the case of PDGM, this is not just new documentation or new billing codes but an almost complete system rewrite for your most important payers: Medicare and Medicare Advantage. Depending on how you pay for your system, there may not be enough incentive for your vendor to comply or to make all needed changes. If you paid a significant up-front fee with a much smaller monthly or annual maintenance fee, your vendor must incur significant cost in system revision to maintain typically small maintenance fees. Additionally, the larger upfront fee locks you into a system for a longer period of time to recover the capital investment.



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PROBLEM 3

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# Software Reporting

Accurate financial reporting is necessary to know where your home health agency stands and whether you are improving or declining in performance. Lately, software reporting focuses on flashy reports with questionable purposes. Accuracy, completeness, identifying errors as well as providing useful analysis and helpful breakdowns are what agencies need. Attractive reports are beneficial only if the information gives useful direction to your team.

Actual reporting is often impossible to cover in software reviews because, as with billing and collection, a demonstration is hypothetical or shown through examples as opposed to live data with real and common errors. If there are useful and accurate reports available from your software, how do you know which ones to run and when to run them? How do you know when a given report suggests corrective action? How do you know what action to take when a report identifies negative trends?

Dynamic reporting packages actively assist the user in answering questions and assessing the agency's overall health. Reporting should clearly identify positive and negative trends, areas where corrective action is needed and performance benchmarks.



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If reporting suggests poor performance and you expected good results, support should be able to assist in data analysis. How do you determine whether your reports are inaccurate or your expectations flawed? You are inundated with staffing, schedules and marketing to physicians, hospitals and the community. Can you call software support and get an explanation of data trends or suggestions for improvement? Many agencies find themselves facing these quandaries when software reporting paints a dismal picture of their performance.

Either your software company's development team and support staff can answer these questions or it is unlikely the software your home health agency invested in actually fits your needs.

Even if your software was initially written by developers who knew the industry, regulations and reimbursement models change too frequently to enable an agency to operate successfully with anything but real-time enhancements and software updates to meet rapidly changing demands.

OASIS requirements and clinical regulations change on an annual basis, but Medicare's new PDGM reimbursement model represents the best example of why your software must be completely up to date. PDGM reporting and

statistics must provide a clear outline of your agency's positive or negative trends. The areas and staff requiring improvement must be evident from quick analysis, and implementation of any improvement plan demands real-time and quick access to all the variables driving the PDGM reimbursement algorithm.

When your team continually makes mistakes using software that's inadequate and/or not updated, it's as if your agency is building up plaque in its arteries without even knowing it. When your team doesn't get dependable reports from your system, it's impossible to know whether you're performing well.



**HealthCare  
Strategies Offers  
Solutions That  
Are Proven and  
Effective**





Founded in 1998, HealthCare Strategies began with a single mission: provide high-quality, ethical consulting and outsourcing services at better-than-market rates. In serving home health providers, it quickly became apparent that one of the biggest roadblocks to success was their use of inadequate and poorly maintained software packages. Pairing our experience and knowledge of the home health industry with an internal demand for a better tool, we partnered with several clients to design, code, develop, test and implement HCS Connect™, our software that is specifically designed for the home health end user.

Over the past 22 years, our mission has evolved. In addition to consulting and outsourcing services, we have bridged the gaps that exist between the needs of an agency and what is needed to fulfill those needs. By living up to our commitment to deliver the highest level of customer service, we build long-term relationships with our clients.



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This commitment to our clients starts by HealthCare Strategies' fostering a workplace culture in which our employees stay with our company like family, becoming knowledgeable and seasoned team members that build relationships with clients. Throughout our history, our annual turnover rate has been less than 1.9 percent, and the bulk of our staff has enjoyed careers with HealthCare Strategies employees for 12 to 15 years. This employee retention rate means that:

- .01** All members of staff know our product and can answer most questions related to operation on the first call.
- .02** Every conversation or call is started with a familiar voice, not a stranger.
- .03** Your staff doesn't have to "get to know" our staff.
- .04** Staff know the home health industry and are knowledgeable of the rules, regulations and best practices.

Where your agency might have weaknesses, we're here to offer you our strengths.

HCS Connect™ for Home Health is our user-friendly, Windows®-based software application that is easily scalable to support an unlimited number of users and patient records. For your home health agency to be successful, your team needs access to an up-to-date platform that can ensure you're meeting the latest regulations and using the newest reimbursement models. HCS Connect™ for Home Health is the one software application that can help your team manage the diverse requirements of home health and receive the kind of support you need to make informed and proactive decisions.

Quite simply, with the exception of patient care, HealthCare Strategies can handle everything related to the home health industry, including auditing and overview services. Where your agency might have weaknesses, we're here to offer you our strengths.

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# Why HealthCare Strategies Stands out Compared With Our Competitors

Some competing companies launch software with troublesome operation and provide inadequate and limited software training and support from representatives not familiar with the healthcare industry and all its quickly changing regulations and reimbursement models. HealthCare Strategies goes the extra mile in producing software that works as you need it to and stands by it with reliable support.

At HealthCare Strategies, we work hard to give our clients an experience that is much better than what they're used to in using competing software and working with other companies. Additionally, we don't sell you unrealistic expectations and are straightforward in saying that our software, although robust and regularly updated, takes some time and attention to learn properly so that your home health agency can get the most out of it.



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*“Seriously, had it not been for HealthCare Strategies, we would have gone out of business. The software and billing services are great, and the support is unbelievable.”*

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This is why we're committed to helping your team learn how to master HCS Connect™ for Home Health through our ConnectOffice™ and ConnectMobile™ training sessions. While other software providers limit support hours or charge for help requests over a predefined limit, we do not. Our goal is your success, and we don't want "buyer remorse." Software proficiency leads to a happier, more productive experience, which in turn leads to a healthier bottom line.

There may be times when your staff is stuck on an issue or your agency has new team members learning your software, and customer service calls to HealthCare Strategies may be needed. You can trust that our customer service team has your back and knows the healthcare industry well. Our customer service team knows our software inside and out, and their knowledge of the home health industry enables them to offer guidance in ways our competitors cannot.

At HealthCare Strategies, we know how important it is to get things right, and you can rest assured that we'll do our best to help you solve problems quickly and effectively. Even more, we truly listen to your software suggestions. Our programmers and information technology support staff members work for you and value any input you can provide to help make our software better meet industry needs.

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Finally, one of our goals is for your home health agency to receive accurate financial reporting. To achieve this goal, we assist with every monthly financial close. We understand how critical this information is to manage your business, monitor your cash flow and measure your financial success. Additionally, supervisors and administrators must be clear on whether your agency is improving or declining in performance. We are committed to ensuring that both our staff and our technology are up to date in order to guide you through any questions you might have on your way to having a transparent assessment about your performance. If you're struggling to optimize performance under Medicare's recently introduced PDGM reimbursement model, trust that we're the folks you can turn to for help.



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*“We love the software, and we love HealthCare Strategies. It is so nice to see that you take our suggestions seriously. We are so excited when we see changes in the software that we asked for!”*

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# Benefits of Partnering With HealthCare Strategies

Every home health agency, including yours, has its strengths and weaknesses. These weaknesses can vary widely, but HealthCare Strategies has plenty of expertise to offset your area of weakness with our strengths.





## Expertise

From a software perspective, HCS Connect™ for Home Health support staff is backed by consulting experts in every area of home health, with RNs, CPAs, IT developers, billing and collection staff, and diagnostic coding staff on board.



## Support

Included with our software, you get free consulting and support from a full-service home health consulting company with more than 22 years of experience.



## Outsourcing Services

Additionally, if your agency does not have the expertise or time, we can provide top-shelf outsourcing services for ICD-10 Diagnostic Coding or Billing and Collections. Although these outsourcing services reduce management stress, their cost is often exceeded by the improved reimbursement or collections that result from the services.



## Peace of Mind

Moreover, there is also great peace of mind in knowing that vacations, medical leave, volume fluctuations or other problems commonly faced by any agency will not affect your workflow or cash flow.

# Do you like what you've learned about HealthCare Strategies?

Let's talk about your home health agency's needs and how HealthCare Strategies is best able to help your team maximize its performance.



# Bridging the Gap in Healthcare



HealthCare Strategies

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