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## Does Your Network Resemble the "Beverly Hillbillies" Car?

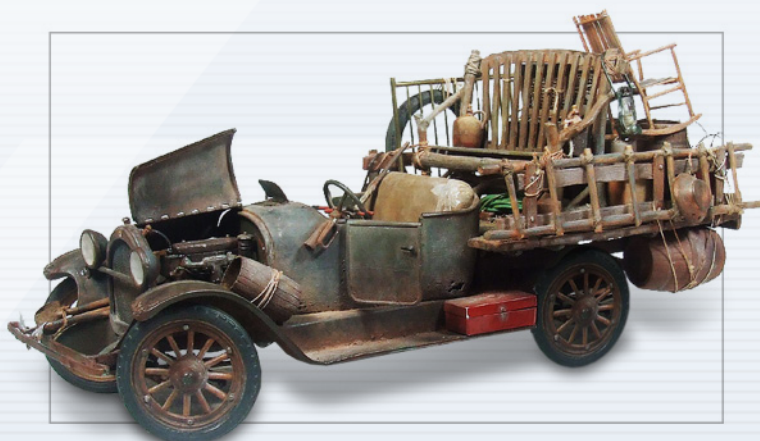
By Michael D. Brumfield

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I read the article today entitled "**Nine Lessons Learned from E-Medical Record Veterans**" from InformationWeek.com. While the article discusses ways to try to improve a project of implementing a medical records software package, I couldn't help but picture the image of the "Beverly Hillbillies" car in my head. This is probably not the image that the author tried to convey so I will explain.

The article mentions one healthcare system spending \$40 million on a system rollout. Then the other extreme is mentioned of a system available at Sam's Club coming installed on a system. I can't help but draw a parallel with the extremes encountered in project rollouts at small to mid-sized business. I remember researching document imaging systems for one customer a couple of years ago. The price ranged from seven thousand to almost 70 thousand dollars. The problem was that the low end solution did not integrate fully into the client's network and the high end solution, integrated well but cost more than the project was budgeted for.

What was the best solution? A middle of the road application was chosen. What was the result? Maybe a network that began to resemble the "Beverly Hillbillies" car. Think about this image, there is a car with all kinds of items hanging off of it. Many of the items don't really belong but they are there. Similarly, this is how some networks have grown. Devices have been haphazardly added to provide temporary fixes. Then more devices are added with similar lack of planning. Soon, the network is overloaded with too many unneeded items which impedes the performance of the network. What is the solution for this problem?



The InformationWeek.com article says to “get expert help”. I would agree with this assessment. I decided to make a list of items that a “network consultant” must at least have a familiarity with if not be an expert in. This list had 29 items in it and I’m sure that is not exhaustive. Some of the groupings had sub-categories that are in depth on their own. These are areas that every client has to deal with. Excluded from this list are any “customized” applications that may be running. The items range from compliance issues such as licensing and HIPPA to security of local and remote access. The consultant is required to look holistically at all aspects of the Information Technology systems while also giving careful attention to the needs of the organization. This may result in a network that still may look a little odd.

But let’s face the facts; every organization is different and has to be assessed as such. Any time we can avoid adding unnecessary items onto the network, or choose the right solution because it integrates properly with the current infrastructure, performance is improved. At PCS, we evaluate a company’s current needs with an eye on the future and make IT recommendations holistically. The end result is that our customers’ networks look and perform somewhat like a luxury sedan, rather than the latest re-creation of the “Beverly Hillbillies” car.

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