



## ***John Muir Health and Optum — A model market performance partnership***

***How John Muir Health advanced patient care through rapid IT integration, modernization and optimization***

Historically, health systems have modernized their IT strategies in one of two ways: either leaning on in-house expertise or working with a vendor partner to manage a slice of operations through consulting or professional services. With the former, the organization builds from scratch and only gets as far as that build can go. With the latter, it typically cobbles a variety of solutions together, hoping for a cohesive strategy.

But as health care organizations continue to move the needle on digital transformation, traditional methods no longer offer a comprehensive path forward. As Deedee Francisco, Vice President of Information Technology, Optum, sees it: The drive for health care innovation requires a new way.

“Digital transformation is so much more than the latest — or shiniest — technology. It’s really about enablement,” she said. “At Optum, we ask: How can we enable an organization to achieve their objectives through digital solutions?”

It’s this question that launched a multi-functional collaboration between Optum and the provider, John Muir Health, in September of 2019. As the first of its kind, the relationship between Optum and John Muir Health includes Optum managing John Muir Health’s essential nonclinical functions — like IT, revenue cycle management, analytics, purchasing, risk operations and care management — to help the health care

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organization grow its business and reach new patients. Going into its second year, this unique provider-vendor relationship demonstrates firsthand how IT initiatives can be the backbone for success by improving care access and delivery through reducing the administrative burden providers experience.

“The partnership has enabled impactful COVID-19 responses, analytics decision-making, telehealth stand-up and results-driven remote work,” said Bill Hudson, Former Chief Information Officer, John Muir Health.

## Establishing a roadmap for digital transformation

A leading not-for-profit health care provider in the San Francisco Bay area, John Muir Health includes two of the largest medical centers in Contra Costa County: John Muir Health, Walnut Creek Medical Center, a 554-bed medical center that serves as the county’s only designated trauma center; and John Muir Health, Concord Medical Center, a 244-bed medical center in Concord, CA. Together, these John Muir Health medical centers are recognized as preeminent centers for neurosciences, orthopedics, cancer care, cardiovascular care and high-risk obstetrics.

Regardless of John Muir Health’s credentials, its executives could see a limit to the health system’s growth as an independent organization. Therefore, John Muir Health established several key goals along the path of digital transformation: increase the efficiency of administrative operations; improve IT staff development and retention;

improve rollout and management of IT support software and applications; and, above all, center innovation around patient care and consumer satisfaction.

This was in line with what Optum had to offer. As Francisco, who leads the John Muir Health account in IT, noted: Their relationship created an opportunity to see the forest *and* the trees. “We immediately saw the opportunity to make big-picture innovations that would support John Muir Health’s day-to-day operations and strategic objectives,” she said.

As part of the model, approximately 500 John Muir Health employees were rebadged to Optum, with approximately 200 of those employees coming from its in-house IT department. Before service commencement, the two organizations went through an extensive due diligence period, including numerous strategy workshops, human resources onboarding and culture sessions to ensure a seamless transition and cultural alignment.

“Often, vendors come in with solutions that don’t adequately address the challenges their client is facing,” said Francisco. “It was crucial for us to understand the *what* and *why* behind John Muir Health’s business strategies before we determined the *how*.”

## IT challenges become accomplishments

After countless collaborative sessions used to determine a path to partnered success and six months into service commencement, John Muir Health and Optum experienced a fork in the road, the COVID-19 pandemic.

But instead of limiting their potential, the challenges of the pandemic enabled them to advance IT projects on a faster timeline. “What might have taken two or three years had to happen in weeks and months,” said Francisco. “Everyone — from John Muir Health’s clinicians to our IT teams — was very receptive to change; we had to be.”

As Francisco recalls, her team immediately shifted priorities to focus on digital solutions that would enable patient care while limiting exposure to the virus. First, her team set out to establish telephone contact centers and online scheduling capabilities so that patients could set up urgent and primary care appointments and engage with their providers remotely. They then worked diligently to grow telehealth capabilities to up to 500 visits per day. And they enabled electronic check-in and billing functionalities so that John Muir Health could process patient sign-in forms and payment collection online.

“Our data suggests that digital collection yields a higher revenue than the traditional over-the-counter model. So even with limitations to in-person interactions, John Muir Health was able to get revenue in the door,” reported Francisco.

And these innovations have been maintained, even as John Muir Health resumed in-person visits. Francisco reports the organization is still managing approximately 30% of primary and urgent care visits through telehealth.

But perhaps the most poignant moment for Francisco was when her team expanded digital scheduling capabilities for the COVID-19 vaccination.



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BILL HUDSON | Former Chief Information Officer | John Muir Health

Immediately after California announced vaccine eligibility for patients 60 years old, the John Muir Health and Optum teams spent the weekend building the solution that would send scheduling invitations to all eligible patients in their EHR system.

"That was the power of digital transformation. Within 48 hours, we had 6,000 appointments set up for the next three weeks," said Francisco. "I remember when we opened the clinic that following Monday morning and I saw every slot filled — it was monumental to see that we had effectively connected with that age group through digital means."

### A third way to optimize IT

John Muir Health was Optum's pilot account for this multi-functional engagement model. But since 2019, Optum has taken on more relationships with similar organizations looking to drive digital transformation while staying independent. Francisco says this strategic relationship is a viable option for organizations seeking improved IT strategies because it can modernize and accelerate performance in effective, cost-efficient and scalable ways. Leveraging

Optum's global best practices, this model allows organizations to achieve enterprise transformation with a focus on growth, cost reduction, security and next-generation interoperability with IT capacity.

"At Optum, we bring built-in and tested tools, capabilities and technologies to the table. It would be a different story if we had to do everything from scratch, but we don't," she said. "This allows providers to focus on what providers do best, providing excellent patient care."

John Muir Health had impressive metrics to show for its partnership with Optum at the one-year mark in September 2020:

- 100% of its IT employees successfully rebadged and transitioned to Optum, with many seeing growth through promotions and opportunities to move into new roles
- The organization saw a 25% improvement rate in First Call Resolution (FCR) and a 25% increase in IT support via Optum's global staffing model
- With 77 projects "going-live" over 12 months, the partnership also boasted an impressive 256,000-plus hours of COVID-19-related build-out

"We're going to focus on the things that we're really good at," said Hudson. "And we're going to bring partners in for the things they're really good at. And those two organizations create synergies where it's not one plus one is two, it's one plus one is something really interesting, which is, we're providing care in a different way."

And the value of this unique relationship goes both ways. "By partnering with John Muir Health, we can better understand the priorities of providers to enable innovation," said Francisco. "We can leverage the strengths of both organizations to be mutually beneficial and to serve our patient communities better."

**To learn more about how Optum can help your organization streamline processes and innovate digital transformation, visit [optum.com/itperformance](https://optum.com/itperformance).**



#### About Optum

At Optum, we are a leading health services innovation company dedicated to helping make the health system work better for everyone. We create simple, effective and comprehensive solutions for organizations and consumers across the whole health system by integrating our foundational competencies of consumer experience, clinical expertise, data and analytics, and embedded technology into all Optum services. By understanding the needs of our customers, members and patients and putting them at the center of everything we do, we will achieve our aspiration of improving experiences and outcomes for everyone we serve while reducing the total cost of care.