

# 10 Signs Your Current Physical Therapy Software is Bad for Business

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**The writing is on the wall**—and it's probably been there for quite some time. Deep down, you know it's time to move on from your current physical therapy software. But admitting defeat in any relationship can be hard to do—especially after devoting so much time, energy, and money. But that doesn't mean you should continue living with a subpar solution or doling out more of your—and your staff's—most valuable resources when you're getting back less than you deserve. While this may be hard to hear, take comfort in the fact that there are plenty of other physical therapy software systems in the sea, and one of them is perfect for you. In this guide, I'll outline ten clear-cut, indisputable signs your current practice management solution is bad for business.

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# 1. It's locally hosted.

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If you're having to host your current physical therapy software on your own server (i.e., you had to download, install, and store your software), then you're undoubtedly spending more money and time than you should be. With this type of setup, you're responsible for not only securing your patients' protected health information (PHI), but also ensuring that the system remains up-to-date—if your vendor upgrades its technology at all. Otherwise, how can you be sure that you have the tools necessary to remain compliant with ever-changing regulations? You can't—and that's a scary thought. One missed update, and your locally hosted server-based system becomes a dangerous relic.

## The Better Way

Web-based practice management software enables you to securely access your documentation anywhere—and anytime—as long as you have an Internet connection. And because good web-based software vendors store all their data with top-tier security agencies and provide clinic administrators the ability to control access through unique IDs and passwords, you can rest assured knowing that your patients' PHI—and your clinic's important business and financial information—is always safe and secure.

### **Never perform—or hire costly IT staff to perform—a manual upgrade again.**

Instead, your EMR vendor will automatically update the system for you, so you'll always have the latest technological advancements and relevant compliance features at your fingertips. That means you'll never miss out on potential incentive payments or experience painful fee schedule adjustments.

### **Cut the upfront cost and commitment.**

Web-based physical therapy software requires significantly lower capital investment—and subsequent financial commitment—than traditional, locally hosted systems. With online solutions, you don't have to purchase and install expensive equipment.

And with no physical hardware in your building, there's no need to power it, store it, maintain it, secure it, and replace it once it fossilizes. Just think what you could do with all the space you're currently using to house your bulky, boxy, high-maintenance local server-based system.

Now, you might be hesitant to give up on your current system—especially considering all of the time and money you've already invested. But keep in mind that in the end, transitioning to the right web-based physical therapy software will be worth it. With minimal initial setup costs, no hardware, and no need for dedicated space to house said hardware, your new web-based EMR will pay for itself in significantly less time than your behemoth local server-based one.

While you can't recover the expenditures you've already made—many locally hosted server-based systems charge about \$30,000 per practice for implementation, plus fees for support and maintenance—you can save a whole lot going forward. **Given that 10,000 baby boomers will turn 65 every day through 2029**, your practice will likely continue to grow—and the more you grow, the more leverage you get from the dollars you spend on implementing a web-based system.

## 2. It doesn't scale as you do.

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Speaking of impending growth, **your EMR should be empowering you** to help more patients by scaling with you—not making things more difficult—as your caseload gets larger or your clinic expands to multiple locations. If your current physical therapy software solution charges per chart, then the more patients you see, the more you'll pay. That's not an incentive for growth; it's a punishment. And the last time we checked, your practice management solution should be on your side—helping you achieve greatness in practice—not nickle-and-dime you.

Additionally, some EMRs on the market right now believe that in order to keep their customers loyal, they have to hold said customers' data hostage. If your current EMR won't allow you to access your data in the event that you decide to discontinue your membership, it's bad for business—and definitely not aligned with your goals or your best interest. Don't stay beholden to a company that's manipulating you. In this case, the data isn't the only thing being held hostage.

### The Better Way

If you're feeling weighed down by demands, fees, and bad business practices, it's time to break free. Switch to a system that safely secures your data on your behalf with absolutely no absurd notions about who retains ownership rights: you do, obviously. That means you can take your data with you anytime you please.

The best EMRs don't keep you under contract. They make their products so good that their customers want to keep using them. And if for some reason their system is not the best fit, they'd rather their customers have the freedom to find a partner who is. Now that sounds like alignment.

### 3. It doesn't help you get paid.

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Your practice management solution shouldn't demand that you use all of its features if you don't want or need them. For example, if a vendor requires you to use its EMR and its RCM service or billing software, it's basically forcing you to implement a system that may not fit your clinic's unique business or operational style. This type of system is essentially one big bundled entity, and regardless of which individual features you like, you're stuck with—and paying for—all of them. More often than not, this kind of vendor is a generalist at best—its offerings are passable, but it isn't specialized enough to exceed any expectations.

Be especially wary if your current EMR is giving you pieces of its system at no cost. For example, you shell out for the RCM service and get the documentation portion "free." After all, you've heard the phrase, "you get what you pay for," right? If you're not paying for anything, well, you get the point.

#### **The Better Way**

Instead, choose a solution that offers a best-in-class EMR—with equally excellent billing service and software options. That way, you'll have an exceptional practice management solution that will bend over backwards to ensure your practice has error-free claims, maximum payments, and—in the case of RCM service—a team of experts (trained specialists who know everything about collecting payment in your region and from your payers) constantly working to move your billing processes forward.

If your current vendor doesn't allow you to select the products and services that best suit your business, then it's high-time you switch to one that does. After all, you have better things to do than deal with dirty claims, denied reimbursements, and confusing software systems.

## 4. It's not designed for physical therapists.

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Even the best physician-centric EMR will be cumbersome for a physical therapist. While both specialties have a doctoral title and share a passion for helping people, physical therapists and physicians certainly don't share the same documentation needs. If your practice management system is designed for an MD instead of a PT, you're probably having a heck of a time developing Band-Aid fixes and workarounds to ensure you can complete your documentation compliantly—and thus, get paid. Productivity dramatically affects bottom lines, and nothing zaps productivity like a system that doesn't work for your specialty and workflow.

### The Better Way

Put simply, you deserve a documentation, scheduling, and billing solution that's tailored to you—one that includes **functional limitation reporting**, **8-minute rule** monitoring, and **therapy cap** tracking all built into your software. Pair that with a design that matches the PT workflow, and you're looking at saved time, improved productivity, and zero headaches.

Finally, a physical therapy practice management solution that's good for your business.

**Learn more about WebPT.**

## 5. It doesn't help you stay compliant.

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In the previous section, we hit on the importance of having a physical therapy software that provides functional limitation reporting, 8-minute rule calculations, and therapy cap tracking—but what about everything else you need to remain compliant and get paid? Your EMR needs to help you cover all of your compliance bases, and that especially means ICD-10.

That being said, beware of any software vendor claiming to have an automatic one-to-one crosswalking tool that translates ICD-9 codes into ICD-10. According to this [ICDLogic white paper](#), ICD-9 and ICD-10 “differ so widely that all attempts at translation offer only a series of compromises and subjective choices. This is necessarily so because there is no ‘mirror image’ of one code set in the other.” In other words, proceed with caution: **crosswalks aren't a magical solution**, and they can end up costing you a lot of problems (like claim denials) in the long run. Instead, go with a software that helps you streamline your ICD-10 coding by using **detailed, defensible electronic documentation** as the foundation for code selection.

### The Better Way

Make sure your documentation system can do the following:

- Prompts you to document the specific details of every patient's injury or issue.
- Suggests a more specific code when one with a greater level of specificity exists.
- Alerts you when you've selected an invalid code or one that's not billable.
- Maintains a complete library of ICD-9 and ICD-10 codes (some payers, like auto and workers compensation companies, still use ICD-9).
- **Provides free ICD-10 training, support, and resources.**
- Bases its ICD-10 code library on more than just **general equivalence mappings (GEMs)**.

## 6. It doesn't provide free training and support.

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If you're paying extra for support and training—or worse yet, there's no one available to answer your calls—then your current software is definitely bad for business. Sure, your system should be intuitive and easy to use, but good training should be a given, and support should always be available in case you need it. The last thing you want is to have an urgent question and either not be able to reach someone or have to shell out your hard-earned dollars just so you can get back to work.

### The Better Way

Opt for an EMR vendor that prides itself on providing exceptional customer support and training—for free. That goes for educational content as well: your practice management software vendor should offer incredibly helpful and relevant [articles](#), [blogs](#), [webinars](#), and [guides](#) about not only the company's product, but also the topics that are crucial to you and your industry.

Your software vendor should demonstrate that it cares about your industry; it should be run by thought leaders who are passionate about physical therapy and physical therapists. After all, all of that passion will flow right into the software they create.



## 7. It doesn't track patient outcomes.

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We're in **a pay-for-performance healthcare environment**, so it's crucial for therapists to have the tools necessary to demonstrate their value. That's why **the best software for physical therapists has built-in outcomes tracking**, complete with a library of evidence-based, risk-adjusted tests—as well as integrated patient surveys and comprehensive reports—that are already familiar to, and respected within, the healthcare community at large. Such tools include:

- Quick DASH
- Lower Extremity Functional Scale (LEFS)
- Oswestry
- Neck Disability Index
- Dizziness Handicap Inventory

Using the data you gather from completing these tests, you'll be able to objectively demonstrate your clinical performance to insurance providers, patients, and referrers.

## 8. It doesn't help you build better relationships.

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No EMR can build relationships for you, but it should be able to help you do so—both with patients and providers. If your EMR is so clunky and cumbersome that you can't possibly document thoroughly while simultaneously devoting enough attention to your patients to ensure you're providing exceptional bedside manner, then your system has got to go. You need an EMR that you can tailor to fit your clinic's needs. That way, you'll be able to document smoother, faster, and with a lot less typing.

### The Better Way

Look for a system that:

#### **Comes with smart text.**

This feature allows you to enter common phrases and goals as presets so you can cut down on the time it takes for you to type the same information over and over again. This will free you up to spend more time treating—and interacting with—your patients.

#### **Allows you to create custom initial evaluation profiles.**

That way, if—for example—you find yourself entering the same information into two separate fields, you can remove one of them. And that means you won't waste time—or energy—tabbing through extraneous fields.

#### **Has integrated PROMs.**

PROMs provide a fantastic way to further engage your patients in their care, because you can use the time you spend entering patient data into the system to discuss the patient's answers with him or her. This is also a great opportunity for you to highlight the progress the patient has made as a result of your therapeutic intervention. After all, you'll have **the data** to back it all up right there at your fingertips.

#### **Tracks referrals.**

As for your fellow providers, your EMR should be tracking information to help you keep tabs on who in your circle of peers is sending patients your way—and who may need a reminder about your services. This kind of insight will help you develop symbiotic relationships that can improve your standing in the community as well as your bottom line.

## 9. It doesn't provide you with valuable business intelligence.

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Data is king, so if your current physical therapy software isn't analyzing your data and presenting it to you in the form of meaningful, impactful, and easy-to-understand reports, it's not living up to its potential.

### The Better Way

At the very least, your EMR should offer real-time business intelligence reporting, so you can:

#### Hold your staff accountable.

Clinic administrators should be able to track staff productivity and audit activity within the application to ensure optimal employee performance.

#### Monitor your clinic's compliance.

Your EMR should provide you with a variety of compliance reports that allow you to monitor your clinic's performance in relation to PT-specific compliance regulations, including functional limitation reporting and patient progression toward the therapy cap.

#### Increase referrals.

Referral tracking and reports can be incredibly beneficial when it comes time to analyze the impact of your marketing efforts.

#### Maximize clinic revenue.

An EMR with an arsenal of business reports affords you the ability to track and identify lost patients—including cancellations and no-shows—as well as monitor billing information, such as claim status and units billed. Without this type of data at your fingertips, how will you be able to identify missed revenue opportunities?

#### Stay on top of patient note requirements.

Your physical therapy software should also provide you with a certification status report—which ensures your patients' plans of care are always up to date—and a Medicare therapy cap report, which shows you your patients' progression toward the cap.

## 10. It overlooks your front office.

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In addition to streamlining your back office operations, your physical therapy software should enhance your front office operations—and that requires stellar front office features that ensure you and your staff can easily schedule and track patients, send automatic appointment reminders, and upload important patient documents. You shouldn't ever have to deal with double-booking, fumbling with paper calendars, or misplacing patient prescriptions. Instead, your EMR should have your back when it comes to:

### Scheduling

- Booking, changing, and removing patient appointments.
- Setting recurring patient appointments and meetings.
- Dragging and dropping to reschedule appointments.
- Tracking no-shows and cancellations.
- Seeing multiple therapists' calendars in one view with color coding.
- Creating calendars for rooms or machines that require reservations.
- Monitoring Medicare patients' progress toward the therapy cap within appointment entries.

### Automated Appointment Reminders

- Sending automatic appointment reminders to patients via text, email, or phone.
- **Reducing costly no-shows by as much as 30%.**
- Relieving front office staff from time-consuming patient calls.
- Increasing patient engagement with professional reminders.
- Uploading external documents (like diagnostic images, patient-signed consent forms, physician referrals, and prescriptions) directly into your patient's records.
- Creating an online archive of information on each patient that anyone on your team can access.
- Faxing and emailing patient notes directly from the system.

## Patient Intakes

Your practice management solution should allow you to embed a customizable intake form into your website for patients to complete prior to their first office visit. This reduces your patients' wait time—thus creating a better patient experience. And because the information the patient enters transfers directly into your EMR, you can quickly review it, and then easily establish a patient record. **No more manual data entry errors** or trying to decipher a patient's chicken-scratch handwriting. You can even customize the form to include specific data fields, your clinic logo, and your color scheme.

If your EMR is bad for business, don't despair. There's a better option.

**Request a tour of the industry-leading physical therapy software solution.**

# The Overwhelming Benefits of a Good EMR

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Before your frustration with your current EMR sets in—and we don't blame you if it already has—you should know that there are physical therapy software solutions that are actually good for business. In fact, the best solutions offer a ton of great benefits, including:

- **Defensible, secure, professional, and efficient documentation**
- **Built-in scheduling tools** with automatic appointment reminders and no-show tracking
- **Comprehensive business intelligence and reporting tools**, so you can monitor metrics that are meaningful for your clinic
- **Integrated billing** for clean claims and faster reimbursements
- **Integrated outcomes tracking**, so you can collect objective data to assist you in proving your value and enhancing patient care

With a little planning and forethought, you can cut the cord to your bad-for-business system and make the switch to one with a whole host of benefits that will make a real difference in the success of your practice. In fact, **this handy guide** will help you shop for the right physical therapy software, and **this one** will walk you through everything you need to know about implementation and training.

# 10 Signs Your Current Physical Therapy Software is Bad for Business

How does your current physical therapy software stack up?

True	False	
		It's locally hosted.
		It doesn't scale with my business.
		It doesn't help me get paid.
		It's not designed for physical therapists.
		It doesn't help me stay compliant.
		It doesn't provide free training and support.
		It doesn't track patient outcomes.
		It doesn't help me build better relationships.
		It doesn't provide me with valuable business intelligence.
		It overlooks my front office.

If you've answered true to any of the above statements, your software solution is bad for business. But don't worry; there's a better option.

**Go to [get.webpt.com/emrguides](https://get.webpt.com/emrguides) to see WebPT in action.**

# Let's Talk

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I'm a physical therapist with more than 15 years of experience practicing in sports medicine and orthopedic private practice. I'm also the co-founder and president of **WebPT**, which is a web-based electronic medical record solution for PTs, OTs, and SLPs. I started this company in 2008 with my husband, Brad—a seasoned technologist—because there wasn't a documentation software available that truly suited my needs as a physical therapist and clinic director. Since then, we've grown to more than 55,000 Members at over 8,500 clinics. My team and I created this billing guide because one of our goals as a company is to help rehab therapists achieve greatness in practice. And that starts with education.

I'd love to open up a discussion about billing and our profession in general. Join me on LinkedIn or Twitter, or shoot me an email. The only way we can propel the PT, OT, and SLP industries forward is through honest dialogue. Can't wait to hear from you.



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## Special Thanks to my eBook Team



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# About WebPT

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With more than 55,000 members and 8,500 clinics, WebPT is the leading electronic medical record (EMR) solution for physical, occupational, and speech therapists. Simple and affordable, WebPT makes it easy for therapy professionals to transition from paper and clunky server-based software to a user-friendly, web-based solution. With WebPT, clinic owners, therapists, directors, and front office staff have HIPAA-compliant access to patients' medical records anywhere, anytime, from any web-enabled device.

WebPT's therapy-centric design and scalable architecture make it a great fit for clinics of any size, and the web-based application alleviates any large, upfront investments; costly IT support; or bulky, in-office servers. It provides an integrated method to manage patient documents and progress as well as clinic schedules, analytical reports, and billing. WebPT has an intuitive workflow, allowing therapists to efficiently create compliant and consistent documentation.

In addition to documentation, WebPT offers a front office package that includes the tools necessary to run an organized clinic, including a multiuser scheduler with appointment reminders and the ability to upload external patient documents. Through WebPT's suite of reporting tools, therapists and staff can track productivity, cancellations, and no-shows as well as referrals. Therapists also can benchmark and track patient progress through WebPT's outcomes tracking product. Lastly, WebPT's billing options—including the WebPT Billing Service and integrations with several certified billing partners—ensure clinics receive reliable, accurate claims submission and processing as well as speedy, maximized reimbursements.

With WebPT, rehab therapists have a modern, intuitive EMR system that's well-suited to their needs, empowering them to be better in business—and more importantly, enabling them to spend less time on documentation and billing and more time with their patients.

Headquartered in the historic Warehouse District in downtown Phoenix, WebPT has a 99.9% uptime rate and a 99.5% customer retention rate. It was named to the Inc. 5000 list of the nation's fastest-growing companies four years in a row.



**Learn more  
about WebPT.**