

The 5 C's of Protocols

Navigating the complexities of protocol development and management.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Communication	2
2. Consistency	4
3. Complexity	6
4. Coverage	8
5. Cost	9
Conclusion	11

Introduction

5 C's of Protocols

Protocols are important, but do we really know why? In this eBook, we'll explore the business benefits, mortality ramifications, and cost advantages of having current protocols not only in place, but easily accessible for all.

That's easier said than done—even in our modern world. Why? Stakeholder approvals, wireless communication/syncing in remote or signal heavy areas, and development costs just to name a few.

Luckily, these challenges are surmountable, but first, let's dive into the 5 C's of Protocols:

- **Communication**
- **Consistency**
- **Complexity**
- **Coverage**
- **Cost**



1. Communication

According to Kristina Martic,* the Head of Communications at Semos Cloud, business communications fall into four categories:

- **Internal upward communication:** Employee to manager
- **Internal downward communication:** Management to employees
- **Internal lateral communication:** Among employees
- **External communication:** To customers, vendors, or prospects

In the world of protocols, it's most common to experience downward communication. In the medical field, this includes establishing a group of experienced doctors that publish protocols, and then push them out for everyone to follow.

These downward communications usually result in outdated printed posters and binders, or email overload as each person is notified of the protocol update. Each alternative has its range of shortcomings. Physical protocols are at least visible but are often unsightly, expensive, and time consuming to update.

Surely going the email route is the better alternative—email is searchable and leaves a low level bread crumb trail. Perhaps, but these types of notification emails are difficult to keep track of, tough to reference in high pressure situations, and are rarely read in a timely manner—if read at all. Additionally, there is no way to ensure everyone is aware of the protocol, let alone appropriately trained.

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*<https://blog.smarp.com/11-reasons-why-business-communication-is-crucial-for-companys-success>

Healthy protocols will live in an environment that facilitates feedback from anyone in the company, is easily accessible on the job, and provides transparency as to who has been trained on them.



Achieving effective communication is extremely difficult. Remember, communication takes on four forms. Organizations need to retire the old view that it is sufficient to simply send directives from a super to a subordinate, and create a system that facilitates upward, downward, and lateral communication.

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Most people view protocols as static rules, when in reality, they are the result of years and years of small iterations through multiple communication types.

Don't fall victim to the email-only communication for updating and maintaining protocols. Instead invite upward, downward, and lateral communication to make protocols a vital part of delivering consistent patient/customer care across the organization.

2. Consistency

By design, protocols are in place to help organizations be consistent. So the problem is not the protocols themselves, per say, but the individuals who inadvertently forget about, or worse, intentionally ignore them.

Thus, protocol consistency is more of a cultural behavioral challenge. It's important then to pin-point why protocols aren't used in certain applications:

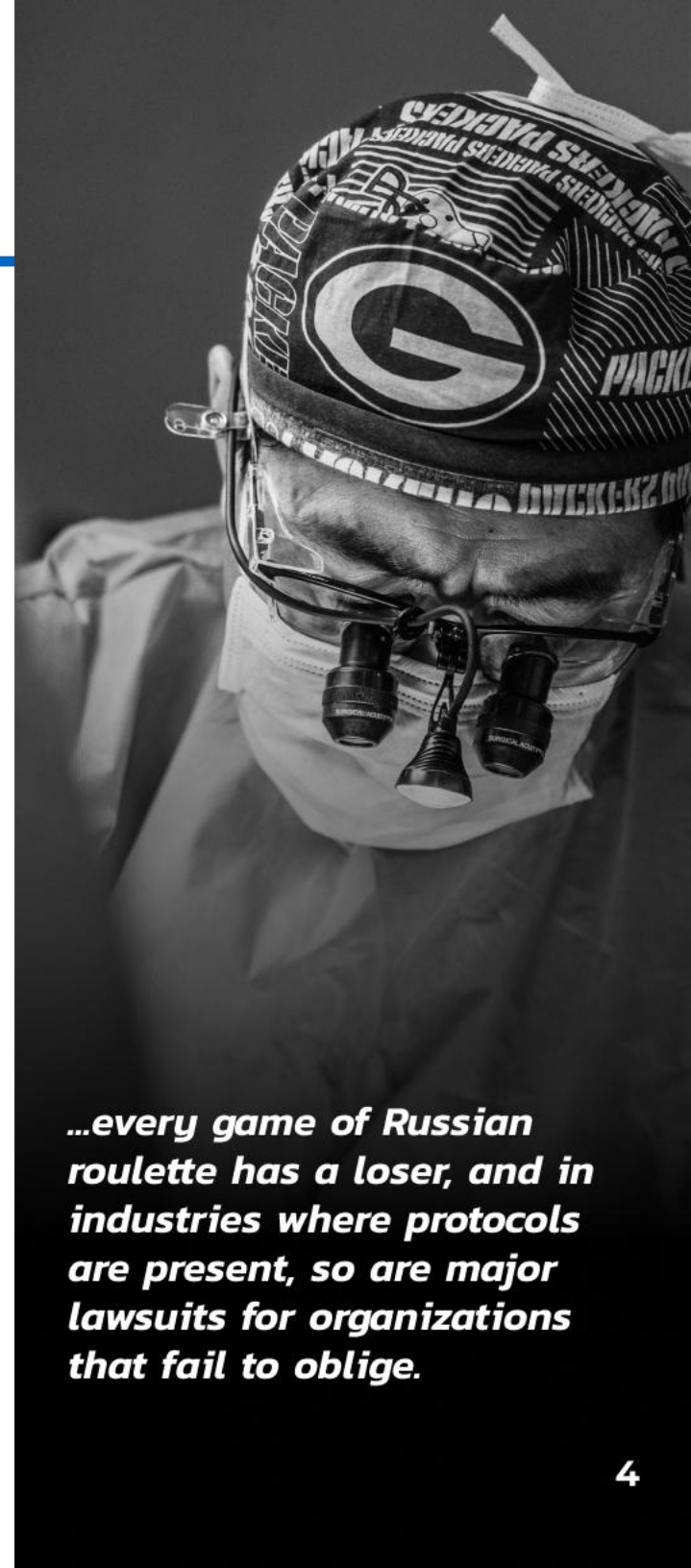
Inadequate training: team members simply aren't aware of protocols, how/where to access them, and/or apply them

Accessibility: protocols are difficult to access due to physical limitations ie. there is only one copy of the protocols

Arrogance: team members have an "I know the drill" attitude versus frequently referring to approved practices and procedures

Perhaps, while the above mentioned scenarios may be present in your organization, they may not be causing catastrophic consequences. That may be, but eventually, every game of Russian roulette has a loser, and in industries where protocols are present, so are major lawsuits for organizations that fail to oblige.

Beyond covering your legal tail (which we'll speak more to later under Coverage), consistently using protocols in the workplace breeds an environment where accountability can flourish. Furthermore, the scientific method only works when a hypothesis can be tested. Protocols act as a perpetual hypothesis working to be refined over countless executions with careful observations and conclusions drawn each time.



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Eric Holtzclaw, a business strategist for Inc.com noted, “I typically give new initiatives, processes, and organizational structures at least six months before judging them a success or failure. It's often minor tweaking instead of major overhauls that make the difference.”*

When protocols are accessible, current, and sufficiently trained, they are used. As they are used, they have the ability to be refined. Refined protocols lead to even better consistency of service, quality, and safety.

[*https://www.inc.com/eric-v-holtzclaw/consistency-power-success-rules.html](https://www.inc.com/eric-v-holtzclaw/consistency-power-success-rules.html)

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3. Complexity

In The Checklist Manifesto, Atul Gawande notes, “In the face of an extraordinarily complex problem, power needs to be pushed out of the center as far as possible,” and that “under conditions of true complexity—where the knowledge required exceeds that of any individual and unpredictability reigns—efforts to dictate every step from the center will fail. People need room to act and adapt. Yet they cannot succeed as isolated individuals, either—that is anarchy. Instead, they require a seemingly contradictory mix of freedom and expectation—expectation to coordinate, for example, and also to measure progress toward common goals.”

This goes back to the first C, Communication. In the medical field, there are too many complexities for any one doctor or administrator to take on. Effective protocols require “all hands on deck.” All four layers of communication (upward, downward, lateral, and external) need to be present.

For a protocol system to truly excel, there needs to be a way for all participating stake holders to be able to collaborate with each other. As ideas, recommendations, and refinements are discussed, protocols are improved. Ideally this communication doesn't have to happen with all present either. In fact, often, that simply isn't possible due to scheduling, and/or geographical separation. Having the ability to leave a suggestion, propose a question, or affirm another's findings on an as-able basis is desired.



4. Coverage

In the world we live in, coverage is crucial, both for peace of mind and protecting your organization from unwarranted litigation. So what questions should you be asking yourself about being covered?

Does your organization have the proper protocols in place?

Are they accessible to staff?

Are your team members trained on the protocols?

Do the staff regularly use the protocols where applicable?

Is there a record that they were accessed and/or applied?

According to an article from the Journal of the American Medical Association, as many as 225,000 people die each year from medical malpractice. This is a serious issue. Only heart disease and cancer edge out physician error as the leading causes of death in the United States.*



*<https://www.galfandberger.com/resources/medical-malpractice-statistics/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20medical%20malpractice,about%20one%20million%20per%20year.>

The number of medical injuries resulting from malpractice is even higher, often crossing one million cases per year. Of that, an average of 85,000 malpractice claims are filed. Regardless of the actual number—as important as that is—the fact is this: the number of cases is trending higher each year.

Being a doctor, especially in high risk, high stress situations, is incredibly challenging. The last thing the doctor should have to worry about is being sued. They should only be expected to do the best they can with the available information. Having accessible, current protocols that can track usage will serve as a protective shield for both patient and practitioner.

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5. Cost

We've all heard the proverbial saying, time is money, but that's a fact. Every moment has an opportunity cost. With protocols, there are two major potential routes: physical and digital protocols are there are costs with both.

Here's what you should be considering:

Physical Printed Protocols

Pros	Cons
They're public	Locked to a physical location
Low tech—don't require a battery or signal	Difficult to search
	Lack any form of true tracking (time, date, location stamp)
	Expensive to print and place
	Take weeks if not months to update

Digital Protocols via app

Pros	Cons
Real-time accessibility	Potential limitations to integrate with in place systems
Interactive—users can comment and provide feedback on protocols	Require a physical device/power/signal
Easily searchable	
Can share with other users	
Leave digital breadcrumbs from user engagement	

With the proper set of protocols in place, there are even greater intangible costs to consider as well. Can the right protocol system save time and energy for your most valuable staff? With saved time, how will those staff members' quality of work be benefitted? What can they now focus on doing versus answering the same technical questions time and again?

With not only the right protocols in place, but the right system and infrastructure to house the protocols, the potential cost savings in time, money, and life would be difficult to put a price on. So the question then becomes what is the right platform to store and manage the protocol lifecycle?

With not only the right protocols in place, but the right system and infrastructure to house the protocols, the potential cost savings in time and money.



Conclusion

ProtocolNow is a software platform that houses the protocol lifecycle. In business, protocols are everywhere, and properly managed and followed protocols deliver more consistent service and results. ProtocolNow empowers clients to develop, train on, apply and refine protocols with their easy-to-use proprietary platform.

Communication

ProtocolNow allows for all four types of communication: upward, downward, lateral, and external. Within an organization, users can start peer-to-peer collaboration on protocols. Users subscribe to relevant protocols and notify upward admin that they are the care pathways and processes. Once approved, protocols are pushed downward through the org. Externally, protocols can be shared with outside organizations to ensure consistency, speed, and efficiency.

Consistency

Alignment is achieved throughout the organization as everyone gets on the same page. Checklists are standardized and custom built to the needs of the care pathway. Protocols are current as approved information is instantly deployed to users. Users can also confirm the dates that the version in use is current.

Complexity

Challenging processes are broken down and spread across a wealth of knowledge and experience. Collaboration prevails over position.

Coverage

ProtocolNow has detailed analytics of user behavior with the web platform and app. If course corrections need to be made with particular users, the data will help admins to better understand what to focus their attention on.

Cost

ProtocolNow is a practical, and scalable solution to the protocol problem. Reach out to ProtocolNow and they'll help find the best solution for your org's needs.

ProtocolNow

To learn more about ProtocolNow, schedule a demo to view the platform. Our team will demonstrate how it can bring additional value to your organization by streamlining communication, creating unparalleled consistency, spreading out the complexities of protocol development and refinement, and bring you greater coverage and cost savings.

[Schedule a Demo](#)

