

Empowering the Tech-Enabled Workforce:

How Smart Automation is Reshaping RCM, and Why it is Not Enough

Revenue Cycle Management (RCM) sits at the intersection of patient care, data management and financial performance.

It is also at the intersection of traditional and automated work processes. Historically, RCM has required large teams to execute repetitive, rules-driven tasks in order to keep up with payer requirements. The work has not changed—it is high-volume, complex, and often frustrating. What has changed is our ability to execute it smarter. Intelligent automation and AI are transforming RCM operations, improving accuracy, speeding throughput, and delivering insights that were previously out of reach. But one truth has become abundantly clear: **technology alone is not a strategy. People enable value. Technology amplifies it.**

As organizations accelerate their adoption of advanced automation, the ones achieving measurable impact are those preparing their teams—not just their tech infrastructure—for what RCM work looks like next. This article provides insights to guide you through what tech-enabled RCM really requires and how organizations can ensure their workforce is ready for the future.

Evolution Continues, from Manual to RPA to Smart Automation

We have moved far beyond the era where robotic process automation (RPA) was considered transformative. Today's smart automation builds on RPA's rules-based foundation and layers in AI, machine learning, natural language processing (NLP) and predictive analytics to expand what is possible across the revenue cycle.



Adding intelligence to process automation not only makes RCM systems faster, it enables them to do more things.



The strongest use cases include:

- ✓ Eligibility verification & benefits checks
- ✓ Cash posting & remittance processing
- ✓ Denial prediction & prevention
- ✓ Patient financial clearance & communication

These capabilities do not just accelerate processes. They reshape them. By removing administrative burden and preventing downstream issues, automation frees RCM professional to focus on higher-value, more fulfilling work like prevention.

Researchⁱ found hospitals and health systems with the highest technology adoption and automation levels were less likely to have suffered performance slippage last year, make fewer coding and documentation errors, are less challenged by the tight labor market, and are more confident in their ability to improve their RCM performance than peers with moderate or low technology adoption.

That is why RCM modernization is now a top-tier investment. Healthcare executives ranked RCM their top investment priority for 2025 in a survey conducted by Bain and KLAS Researchⁱⁱ, and another separate study found **74% of hospital and health system leaders are prioritizing enhancing automation and AI-driven workflows in their RCM operations.**

It will take more than technology to make these investments successful. Smart automation doesn't produce benefits by replacing people, but by *enabling* them.

Organizations must commit to change and make corresponding investments in their people for their technology ambitions to succeed. Many hospital and health system leaders have learned this lesson, because organizations at higher levels of technology maturity are most likely to prioritize additional staff training and upskillingⁱⁱⁱ despite the RCM automation and performance improvements they have already achieved.

The Human Factor: People Determine Technology's Effectiveness

Capgemini provides a clear summary about why change management is the key to unlocking benefits from automation:

"The transformation of work is enabled by technology, but it relies on people not just changing, but wanting to change. That's why OCM plays such a critical role in ensuring that the return on investment of any major AI project will be realized. If the stakeholders don't get it, they won't buy into it, and it's then very likely the project will fail, and its ROI will not be realized." –Capgemini^{iv}

Smart automation changes workflows. It changes roles. And for some, it raises fears about job security.

Without change management, even the best technology will underperform. That's why change management needs to begin long before any system or process changes. Program leaders need to build trust among the RCM staff that the changes will make their jobs easier and are not being made to eliminate their jobs.

To successfully integrate smart automation, organizations must:

1. Communicate the “why” with clarity and empathy

Focus on how it improves outcomes and reduces burden. RCM staffers do not need to be told that complexity is not going away and that continually coming to work in an environment of rising claims and denials is stressful. Show them how smart automation can address these challenges and has the scalability to accommodate volume increases without causing a corresponding workload increases for staff.

2. Involve staff early

Staff will be more accepting of change if they play a role in shaping it rather than having it imposed on them. Involving staff early improves buy-in and their practical knowledge identifies hidden bottlenecks, unspoken workarounds, and real operational pain point. Early involvement builds trust and builds better solutions.

3. Offer training and upskilling to foster confidence and long-term engagement

Technology sophistication without staff confidence leads to frustration. Organizations that pair automation with robust coaching, upskilling, and change readiness programs accelerate adoption and shorten time to value. Studies show that teams equipped with training outperform those given tools without enablement, every time.

4. Highlight early wins to build momentum and credibility

You don't have to wait until you have data from formal metrics. Sharing anecdotal success stories can go a long way to helping people understand the point of the project and how automation can help.

One of the overarching goals for these and other organizational change management activities is to help RCM staff see smart automation for what it really is: a tool to help them, not a threat to replace them.

Learning from the Medical Coding Experience

Revenue cycle professionals can look to medical coding to see a recent example of how automation has evolved and created new efficiencies in previously automated processes. Early computer-assisted coding (CAC) programs automated documentation review and used AI to suggest possible codes. Human coders verified the review then finalized and applied codes. This is not an end-to-end automated process but does improve accuracy and throughput.

Initial successes have made machine learning models more accurate and helped CAC evolve. Human-in-the-loop (HIL) autonomous coding is an emerging practice where AI assigns codes rather than presenting them to a person to decide.

RCM staffers oversee exceptions and review results to refine the machine learning models. The approach has been highly effective, with KLAS Research identifying CAC as the top AI use case in healthcare in its inaugural study^v of the technology. The organization's 2025 report praised what CAC can do for efficiency, staff morale and ROI, but cautioned that implementation support and training are essential for long-term success. That assessment is consistent with our experience, where the most successful technology programs are those that enhance the skills that employees apply to their purpose.

As an RCM services organization, we believe the future is not fully automated, rather, it is intelligently augmented. People remain the source of insight, empathy, and judgement.

Automation simply gives them the capacity to use those strengths more effectively.

Adopting a hybrid approach with CAC and human coding improves results in two ways—by increasing throughput because of automated coding and raising quality by directing more time to challenging cases. While many organizations focus on encounters per hour as the key metric for computer-assisted coding (2,500 is typically attainable through automation), CAC often makes its strongest impact through discharged not finally coded (DFNC) reduction.

Evolution is not stopping

CAC is another milepost on the journey from manual operations, to RPA, to smart automation. The evolution won't stop there. Smart automation will continue to reshape the revenue cycle. New models will emerge, predictive and generative AI will expand their role, and the volume and complexity of work will continue to rise.

Healthcare leaders can't stop this change, so they should be prepared to manage it. Effective change management will enable organizations to get the most out of any benefits that new developments can provide.

Organizations that thrive will not be the ones chasing technology for technology's sake. They will be the ones who recognize that their strongest differentiator is tech-enabled, future-ready team.

To learn more about Savista, visit [SavistaRCM.com](https://www.savistarcm.com).

ⁱ Savista 2025 Benchmark Survey Report: Insights and Strategies for the Future of RCM. <https://www.savistarcm.com/2025-rcm-benchmark-survey-report/>.

ⁱⁱ Bain and KLAS Research "Healthcare IT Investment: AI Moves from Pilot to Production" <https://www.bain.com/insights/healthcare-it-investment-ai-moves-from-pilot-to-production/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Savista 2025 Benchmark Survey Report: Insights and Strategies for the Future of RCM. <https://www.savistarcm.com/2025-rcm-benchmark-survey-report/>.

^{iv} Capgemini. "Organizational Change Management – The Missing Link in Smart Automation" <https://www.capgemini.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Organizational-Change-Management-OCM-factsheet.pdf>

^v KLAS Research "From Hype to Reality: What Healthcare Leaders Should Know About Autonomous Coding Solutions" August 26, 2025, <https://engage.klasresearch.com/blog/from-hype-to-reality-what-healthcare-leaders-should-know-about-autonomous-coding-solutions/8341/>