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HIT or Miss Chapter 24

The risks were built into the very structure of the collaboration. The health system risked clinician dissatisfaction, workflow disruption, and sunk investment if the solution failed; the vendor risked its credibility and reputation in a nationally prominent academic center. Neither side could succeed alone. The vendor could not engineer clinician adoption without access to actual workflows, and the health system lacked the technical depth to build or adapt the solution independently. The only path forward was shared ownership of design, testing, and implementation, with transparent communication and mutual accountability. Once that joint framework collapsed, success became impossible.

The most dangerous risks were governance breakdown, clinician exclusion, and inadequate testing. Governance failed because no joint steering committee or single source of truth existed for decisions and issue tracking; clinician exclusion guaranteed a misfit solution; and testing was compromised by code churn without regression checks. These structural flaws made success nearly impossible. By comparison, risks like delayed functionality delivery or hardware misconfigurations were serious but manageable, provided the core governance and testing structures were sound. In other words, the project was undone not by technology but by the way humans chose to coordinate, or failed to.

The essential governance requirements would have been a joint steering committee with equal representation from IT, clinicians, and vendor leads; a unified issue-tracking system visible to all parties; staged go/no-go checkpoints tied to validated functionality; and contract clauses that mandated clinician involvement in design and testing phases. Embedding these structures into the contract would have made them enforceable, protecting against the “not my problem” mindset that emerged. With clear accountability and transparent processes, both organizations could have maintained alignment and adapted to challenges instead of spiraling into mistrust and mutual blame.