



PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF SECTRA:

# STAYING AHEAD IN RADIOLOGY IT

**TORBJÖRN KRONANDER**, President of Sectra, discusses the expanding impact of radiology IT and Sectra's unique approach to delivering efficient systems.

## How has IT within radiology evolved over the last 25 years?

**W**hereas 25 years ago there was hardly any information technology (IT) at all in the radiology department or in the hospital at large, today, IT plays a critical role in the delivery of efficient healthcare. About 15 to 20 years ago, images were introduced as a part of the digital environment in the form of PACS in teleradiology. Nowadays, we see RIS/PACS as an intricate part of radiology departments, combined with the technology of electronic medical records (EMRs) which are spreading out over the healthcare

enterprise. Every hospital today has an IT policy, and that policy has a critical impact on the radiology department. IT is very important in giving radiology departments the ability to remain competitive and contain costs while collaborating and consolidating between various institutions. Thus, IT plays a core role in the delivery of efficient patient care and the business strategies of radiologists around the world. All kinds of medical specialists use digital images and reports today.

**Describe Sectra's history and evolution within the radiology IT space. What is Sectra's approach to**

### helping customers deal with the evolving requirements in radiology IT?

Sectra is a vendor that started about 20 years ago in radiology IT. We came into radiology through a teleradiology product from the beginning, as we saw that there were hospitals in rural parts of Sweden that were sending images via taxi to other hospitals that did not have any radiologists on-site. From there, we made efforts to provide an entire film-free radiology department, which we piloted already in 1993 at a small hospital in Sweden. In 1994, we were awarded our first contract for a large hospital, and we were one of the first vendors on the planet that used open standards, Internet technology and standard computers for PACS. This became a huge success and eventually progressed all over Sweden, making Sweden the first country in the world that was 100 percent digital, with no film at all left in the country since 2001. Sectra has done about 60 percent of these installations within Sweden.

Our focus has always been to make the delivery of healthcare effective. We see huge trends in the world that demographics are entrancing, however, there are other trends that may stand to be barriers to success in radiology. The healthcare industry is dealing with more older patients who are living longer; and there is more and more complex image data which must be managed; and at the same time, we are starting to see a shortage of qualified radiologists. These trends all require a drive to become more effective, therefore, Sectra's core mission is increasing effectiveness in healthcare.

In the U.S. market, where our customers range between radiology and orthopedic clinics to large healthcare systems, our goal is to increase effectiveness in an ever-changing healthcare delivery market. For many of our customers, tight integration with health information systems is also a critical measure of success, as a seamless workflow is what truly enables high patient throughput. The key is that the Sectra systems have been designed to flex and integrate with the other IT components required to improve workflow. That has always been a key area of our focus.

### When it comes to partnering with a radiology IT vendor, what characteristics or company traits are most important to consider?

I believe the criteria for choosing the right radiology IT vendor has evolved over time – and it started with making systems work at all, which then advanced to making the systems work well. Nowadays, many vendors in the market offer reliable systems that work well; however, we find that healthcare providers are consistently looking for vendors that can offer effective systems – systems that support their business model and enable them to achieve more with less resources. It is actually very interesting to see that the criteria used by second-time buyers of PACS are very different from those of first-time buyers. Whereas first-time buyers may often make premature decisions and purchase PACS from a known vendor without much consideration; second-time buyers invest time in researching different vendors on the market by visiting sites and checking with other users to ensure the systems drive effectiveness before making the careful decision of buying a system.

Since there are now several vendors in the market providing a working system, Sectra is going the extra mile to ensure a working partnership with hospitals and clinics. Today, buyers aren't

just looking for good systems, but also good people to work with. Stability is another driver for partnering with IT vendors, because effectiveness without stability is impossible – and I am proud to say that Sectra offers the most stable solution in the U.S. market.

### What makes Sectra's offerings unique from the rest of the products available in the marketplace?

I believe stability and effectiveness are the two most important aspects of a successful solution. I am confident in saying that Sectra definitely offers the most stable and flexible system that can be integrated into many different systems. Effectiveness and seamless workflow is not only about showing images; it is very much about being able to integrate into other IT systems. We also recruit good people that work toward building a strong partnership with clients. Sectra believes that a system that is not backed by good people to support customers in times of need is not a complete solution, so we are making extra efforts to ensure that our people are the best in the market.

### What kind of advancements and pressing trends do you see on the horizon in radiology IT? How will Sectra continue to stay abreast of these evolutions in the future?

The growing volume of images and complex data is a very important trend that requires vendors to constantly improve systems for information management. Therefore, Sectra believes in offering solutions that are future proof – systems that can easily be integrated with future evolutions around this technology.

Sectra's first customers are now on their fourth complete rewriting of our systems, and have not had to be burdened with paying for another basic PACS again and again. This is solely because Sectra allows systems to be upgraded to align with new and emerging environments. Many of our competitors build systems that become obsolete after 10 years or less, requiring investments in a brand new system altogether. However, we don't believe that is the true nature of an IT system; IT systems should be renewed every year and customers should still be up to date 20 years after their purchase.

Choosing a radiology IT partner is a critical process. It is important that the vendor not only deliver the latest technology, but that they also develop solutions today that will address unknown challenges of tomorrow. I believe Sectra's history as a leading innovator in radiology IT and the spirit and quality of our people enable us to stay ahead of the curve and deliver efficient solutions to our customers. By any measure, including third-party performance rankings such as KLAS, I believe Sectra is a solid, efficient and future-proof radiology provider that intends to stay so for a very long time. **FH**



**DR. TORBJÖRN KRONANDER**, MBA, Ph.D., is Founder and President of Sectra's medical operations. Sectra currently employs more than 450 people, with offices in 11 countries and operations through partners worldwide.