

Case Study

Provider of Dialysis Services

BACKGROUND

Dialysis services provider helps patients nationwide

As the largest independent provider of dialysis services in the United States, this healthcare company is responsible for operating over 1,300 outpatient dialysis centers as well as providing acute inpatient services in more than 800 hospitals across the country. The company serves 103,000 patients in 42 states, as well as the District of Columbia, who have been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease.

On the community level, the company relies on its phone system to make appointments with patients, arrange transportation, and conduct medical consultations. On the corporate level, the company operates several call centers to assist both patients and individual dialysis centers in the effort to provide excellent customer service and facilitate quality healthcare.

CHALLENGE

Facility-level decision-making was problematic

As a result of acquiring other businesses, the company has experienced rapid growth. Consequently, there was not a standard phone system in place throughout all facilities. Many facilities used Nitsuko equipment that was no longer being manufactured or supported, and thus it was often difficult to find technicians who were qualified to service such equipment.

Adding to the problem, all telecommunications decisions were being made at the facility level. This forced local personnel to spend valuable time worrying about their phone systems and searching for the appropriate local technicians to provide network support.

Furthermore, there were no operating controls at the facility level, so when a dialysis center needed new telecommunications equipment, they simply purchased what they needed, even if it was not the recommended system. When a new phone line was needed, the facility simply called the phone company. Often employees making these phone calls lacked adequate understanding regarding the difference between the phone company and the firms that provided related services. Operating without this knowledge led to constant communication problems.

COLLABORATION

Comm-Works helps implement a better telecommunications model

According to the company's telecommunications manager, the company quickly realized that money was being wasted and that a better model was needed to centralize their telecommunications function. After a competitive bidding process, the company hired Comm-Works to manage their telecommunications processes.

In the beginning, the telecommunications manager and the Comm-Works project manager got together and discussed what worked with the current process and what needed to be changed. After assessing the situation, Comm-Works determined the solution to the problem would not require a single project, but a variety of small projects. Comm-Works installed new Avaya Partner ACS systems at new facilities and repaired and upgraded systems at existing facilities.

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According to the telecommunications manager, the collaboration between the company and Comm-Works was effective. She noted that Comm-Works was particularly strong in the area of customer service and in the ability to provide quality work on short notice. Describing the company as “friendly, fair, and flexible,” she was particularly impressed by Web-WorksSM, Comm-Works’ Web-based project management tool.

With Web-Works the telecommunications manager can do her job any time of the day and rely less on communication via telephone. In determining which of the final two competing companies would get the job, the flexibility offered by Web-Works was the single largest deciding factor. Furthermore, because Comm-Works operates across North America, the telecommunications manager never calls from her office in California only to find that an office on the East Coast is already closed. With Comm-Works, she has access to a representative with knowledge of the company’s project 24/7.

VALUE

Comm-Works helps save money

By helping the company to standardize their telecommunications processes and procedures, Comm-Works increased operating efficiency and saved the company thousands of dollars.

For example, it turned out that a number of facilities had maintenance agreements they didn’t even know about or that they just automatically renewed every year. In fact, one facility was paying for maintenance on a system they hadn’t owned for two years. With Comm-Works as its single-source provider for voice and data infrastructure, the company was able to cancel many of these contracts, which saved \$65,000 in the first year alone.

Another facility needed additional phone lines and had received a \$40,000 bid to install a new system which was not as good as the one they currently had in place. Instead, Comm-Works

reprogrammed their existing system, which is still effectively filling the clinic’s needs today. A third facility had 28 trunk lines, which Comm-Works reduced to ten without sacrificing any functional capabilities.

The telecommunications manager’s job became easier as well. “Now I can look up a facility’s service records and understand at a glance what they need,” she said. “Often, instead of purchasing new equipment, we can add functionality and clean up their old phones, which save us a lot of money.” She estimates that the company saved at least \$100,000 during the first year, just on projects she was personally involved with.

RESULTS

“Comm-Works says what they’re going to do, and then they do it.”

By helping to manage the company’s telecommunications function, Comm-Works increased the productivity and effectiveness of the company’s employees who before had been wasting valuable time and money worrying about telecommunications issues. Through Web-Works, Comm-Works also gave the company more control over their project-related activities and provided them with accurate records and documentation of events.

“For a company I had never heard of before,” says the telecommunications manager, “Comm-Works turned out to be very strong.” She added that she would gladly recommend Comm-Works to other companies with similar needs, and would summarize her experience by saying that “Comm-Works says what they are going to do, and then they do it.”

Comm-Works currently serves all of the customer’s phone systems needs, as well as their local telco and snappy modem needs, and also provides cabling and data services.

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