

Hospital Improves Caller Experience and Increases Efficiency

Holland Hospital implemented Unified Communications and continues adding new collaboration and video capabilities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
HOLLAND HOSPITAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare • Holland, Michigan • 1800 Employees
CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver excellent customer care experience • Increase staff efficiency • Minimize operational costs
SOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built fully redundant Medical-Grade Network • Provided administrators and caregivers with advanced collaboration tools • Provided video-based language interpretation services for patients.
RESULTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabled callers to obtain information more quickly • Automated physician notification of off-hours calls • Increased effectiveness of language interpreters

Challenge

A private hospital with 209 beds, Holland Hospital is the leading healthcare provider in the West Michigan Lakeshore area, serving more than 150,000 residents within the primary service area. Advanced technology, comprehensive services, and compassionate care also attract thousands more patients from nearby counties. Thomson Reuters named Holland Hospital one of the top 100 hospitals in the United States.

When the service contract for the hospital’s voice system neared expiration, the IT team began researching advanced communications platforms that would enable an excellent customer care experience, enhance caregiver collaboration, and increase administrative efficiency. “The margin for hospitals is lower than it is for retailers and other industries,” says Randy Paruch, chief information officer for Holland Hospital. “Therefore, to deliver the best care possible, we need to be innovative about operating the business efficiently.”

The hospital wanted a platform that could adapt to changes in the healthcare industry and Holland Hospital itself to deliver value for many

years. For example, the hospital anticipates increasing its use of video for collaborative decision-making and training, avoiding the time and costs of in-person meetings.

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— Randy Paruch, Chief Information Officer, Holland Hospital

Solution

Holland Hospital found its solution in Cisco® Unified Communications. “We chose Cisco Unified Communications because of its comprehensive collaboration capabilities, attractive economics through Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing, and our IT team’s existing skills with Cisco solutions,” says Paruch.

The hospital engaged Netech Corporation, a Cisco Gold Certified Partner, for planning, implementation, and training. The availability of the communications system is crucial in healthcare environments, so Netech helped build a fully redundant Cisco Medical Grade Network, and then implemented Cisco Unified Communications Manager servers in two different data centers and another facility. "If one facility becomes unavailable, we can quickly reroute calls to another facility," says Paruch. Netech made sure the transition to unified communications did not disrupt hospital operations by transitioning several departments to the new system each week over about four months.

To make it easier and more cost effective to add new collaboration applications, Holland Hospital purchased Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing, which simply packages together all client and server software, licensing, and service and support. The package also includes Cisco Unified Communications Software Subscription, which provides three years of access to major software upgrades, enabling Holland Hospital to keep its communications tools up to date without additional expense.

Holland Hospital began with a few collaboration capabilities and will add more over time:

- Cisco Unified Contact Center Express is improving the caller experience in five contact centers: laboratory results, central scheduling, patient accounting, the breast and bone center, and help desk.
- Cisco Unified MeetingPlace® increases productivity by allowing employees to collaborate with voice, video, and web sharing from their desks instead of travelling to a meeting room.
- Cisco Unified Video Advantage adds video to phone calls, bringing interpreters into the examining room, saving an average of 15 minutes for each patient consultation.
- Cisco Emergency Responder automatically notifies internal personnel when someone uses a hospital phone to dial 911, providing the phone's location. Hospital personnel can arrive more quickly than municipal first responders to begin administering medical treatment if necessary.
- The IT team is piloting presence. Using Cisco Unified Personal Communicator, they can see whether other team members are online, on the phone, or in do-not-disturb mode. They just click a coworker's name to send an instant message and can easily place voice and video calls or escalate to a voice, video, and web-sharing session using Cisco Unified MeetingPlace.

Results

Improved Patient and Caller Satisfaction

The caller experience contributes to overall patient satisfaction in healthcare environments. Previously, callers trying to reach a department such as billing or the lab would hear the phone ringing until someone answered their call, and agents did not know how many people were waiting. Now callers can connect sooner because Cisco Unified Contact Center places all calls in a queue and routes them to the first available agent.

Cisco Unified Contact Center also helps the hospital adjust to high call volumes. The Automated Attendant feature gives callers the option to press a button to hear commonly requested information, such as hours of operation, freeing up agents for other calls. "We also use the Automated Attendant to play recorded messages when clinics are closed because of weather or other factors, to save patients an unnecessary trip," says Paruch. Contact center agents can see how many people are waiting, so that they can adjust their pace if necessary. And when call volume peaks, contact center managers use a simple interface to quickly add agents from other hospital contact centers, decreasing caller wait times. "Our contact center managers especially like the reporting built into Cisco Unified Contact Center, so they can see trends and plan staffing levels accordingly," says Joseph VanBelkum, IS project coordinator for Holland Hospital.

Callers who dial the hospital's main number also save time, thanks to the Enterprise Operator Console from Arc Solutions, a Cisco Advanced Technology Partner. Operators see whether a call originates from outside or inside the hospital, so that they can answer external calls first. Then they just click an online staff directory to transfer the call. Internal personnel no longer need to go through the operator because they can view an up-to-date corporate directory on the built-in display of their Cisco Unified IP phone.

Automated Notification of After-Hours Calls

Many physician practices pay an outside service bureau to answer calls after business hours and then notify the physician. "Now we use Cisco Unity Connection voice messaging for the same function, saving service bureau fees," says Paruch. Cisco Unity® Connection records the caller's message and automatically sends a text message or email notification that a message is waiting. Physicians simply click the dispatch message on their smartphones to return the call. If the on-call physician does not respond to the dispatch message within a specified time, the system dials other physicians.

More Effective Language Interpretation

Holland Hospital provides interpretation services for Spanish, Laotian, and sign language. Using the telephone prevents interpreters from seeing facial expressions and body language that are part of accurate communications, and is not possible for patients who are deaf. The alternative, walking about 15 minutes to patient examining rooms, disrupts physician schedules and inconveniences patients. Now when a patient needs an interpreter, an aide wheels a cart with a Cisco Unified IP phone, PC, and Cisco Unified Video Advantage to the exam room to connect to an interpreter working on site or at home.

Increased Mobility

Patient care coordinators at Holland Hospital manage the hospital after hours, and are rarely in their offices. Previously, staff members who needed to reach patient coordinators had to page them, increasing the caller's wait time and adding to overhead noise. Now patient care coordinators carry a Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phone 7925, and can receive calls at their usual phone number in any hospital location.

Next Steps

Holland Hospital intends to continue adding new collaboration tools to deliver an excellent customer care experience and increase efficiency. For example, new clinics will not need their own communications systems, because they can receive voice services over the WAN. And the hospital plans to ask Netech to integrate Cisco Unified Contact Center with databases, so that agents can access the patient's phone call history when they receive the call, saving time for caller and agent alike.

PRODUCT LISTING

Unified Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7975, 7965, 7945, and 7911
- Cisco Unified Wireless IP Phone 7925
- Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing, including:
 - Cisco Unity Connection
 - Cisco Unified Contact Center Express
 - Cisco Emergency Responder
 - Cisco Unified Video Advantage
 - Cisco Unified MeetingPlace

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Unified Communications, visit:

<http://www.cisco.com/go/unifiedcommunications>.

To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation>.



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