

Metro Healthcare System Cuts Costs, Frees IT Staff to Focus on Strategic Projects



Executive Summary

U.S. healthcare providers are in a bind. On one hand, they need to invest in staff development, modern facilities and the latest clinical technologies in order to improve delivery of quality patient care. On the other, making investments is difficult in an era of declining reimbursements.

Facing this situation, a nonprofit healthcare system in a major U.S. city turned to Black Box Network Services for help cutting its operating expenses. Black Box augmented the existing IT staff with personnel to run and support every aspect of their telecommunications department. This freed the IT team to focus on more strategic projects, such as designing the organization's future architecture.

As a result of new efficiencies and capabilities offered by Black Box's staff augmentation services, the customer stands to cut hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual costs. It plans to invest these

savings to expand and improve patient care.

Business Challenges

In one of the nation's largest cities, this metro healthcare system delivers comprehensive clinical services to more than 60,000 patients per year. Almost 10,000 employees and 900 physicians staff its four hospitals and a growing network of more than 20 community clinics. Annual emergency room visits number almost 125,000 per year.

To meet these demands, timely information access and effective communications are critical. Over a decade ago, the healthcare system was among the first in the U.S. to deploy an electronic medical record (EMR) system. Much refined since, it helps clinicians get patient data faster, while reducing data-entry errors. But, ironically, as far ahead as it was in early adoption of EMR, the healthcare system was just as far behind in putting advanced communications to work.

The existing communications infrastructure was comprised of 40 separate, premise-based TDM and IP PBX phone systems from several vendors. Each phone system also required separate maintenance, repairs and spares. Worst of all, most of this equipment was nearing end-of-life. For IT, the risk of doing nothing grew greater each day.

At the same time, the healthcare system was adding a neighborhood clinic every three months to its network of community healthcare centers. But deploying connectivity and communications in each new clinic became a critical-path issue for an understaffed IT team.

With insurance and government reimbursements falling, executive management expected IT to find ways to cut costs both in clinical and back-office settings. At the same time, it wanted IT to help clinicians be more efficient and productive, without compromising the quality of patient care. If anything, patient care should be improved.

How Black Box Helped

In advising the healthcare system's IT group on a way forward, Black Box offered a unique combination of experience and expertise. Its on-site technicians were familiar with the healthcare system's legacy voice and data networks as well as with the IT team and facilities personnel. Black Box had previously provided maintenance services to the healthcare system.

However, in order for the IT team to gain capacity to focus on more strategic issues, it expanded its relationship with Black Box to run and support every aspect of their telecommunications operations, including change control, task management, provisioning, interfacing with the phone company and more. Black Box is directly integrated into all of the provider's internal processes and strives to meet their internal SLAs.

Second, as a top systems integrator, Black Box has the highest technical certifications from all major infrastructure vendors, plus applications experience from thousands of deployments. Black Box is in a position to support a graceful migration from the legacy phone system to the new architecture, regardless of what equipment manufacturer is chosen. As the provider designs its future systems, Black Box is in a position to help ensure the proposed solution will be customer-centric and not vendor-centric.

Finally, Black Box had recently installed a distributed antenna system (DAS) inside each of the four hospitals to improve wireless coverage with greater reliability and less power consumption. Familiarity with the wireless infrastructure put Black Box in a position to manage and leverage

wireless capabilities more efficiently.

Business Outcomes

For the healthcare provider's IT staff, Black Box frees them from day-to-day telecommunications operations. Still they have full operational visibility and accountability via a customer web portal. It gives the healthcare system IT leadership a greater deal of visibility and control through 24x7 access to trouble-reporting, order-tracking and ticket status. It also provides custom performance reports on-demand.

Even more, the new Black Box staff augmentation model lets IT focus on more strategic initiatives in support of making clinicians more efficient and improving patient care.

About Black Box

Black Box is a leading technology solutions provider dedicated to helping customers build, manage, optimize, and secure their IT infrastructure. Black Box delivers high-value products and services through its global presence and over 4,000 team members. To learn more, visit the Black Box Web site at www.blackbox.com

