Case Study

NCD helps the Medical Center of Aurora improve their IT infrastructure to meet new enterprise system demands.

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Solution Overview

Company
The Medical Center of Aurora (TMCA) is part of the HealthONE joint venture in Denver between the HealthONE Alliance and HCA. HealthONE operates five acute care hospitals, one rehabilitation hospital as well as 60 clinics and three surgery centers in the Denver market.

Challenge
The hospital needed to deploy their mission-critical Meditech application in a Window-based PC environment and introduce new medical purchasing software while maintaining the manageability and control of the dumb terminal environment they had previously.

Solution
TMCA worked with Global Village a systems integration firm and an NCD Diamond Partner, to implement NCD ThinPATH PC and Management Portal Software in its 3 campuses.

Benefits
NCD ThinPATH PC and Management Portal Software are enabling TMCA to easily set up and manage PCs and an increasing number of applications from a centralized location, all with a small IT staff.

The Medical Center of Aurora (TMCA) is a 346-licensed bed hospital with a Level II trauma center located in Aurora, Colorado and is the only acute care hospital in the Eastern Metropolitan Denver area. They are committed to providing the highest quality of cost-effective care to their community.

Challenge: Managing growth and improving systems cost effectively
The Medical Center of Aurora faced a daunting set of challenges: The hospital's Meditech application, which the hospital's nursing staff had previously accessed via dumb terminals, now needed to be deployed in a Windows-based PC environment. In addition, a new purchasing management software, MediBuy, needed to be deployed in an environment with access to a web browser. Finally, other administrative requirements were increasing the need for more PCs overall. The impact was 1,500 new PCs that needed to be set up, customized, and supported.

"The dumb terminals had not needed much management," explained Steve Pratt, network administrator, The Medical Center of Aurora. "We now faced a major challenge –a huge increase in the number of PCs without a commensurate increase in technicians to support them. How were we going to deploy that many PCs and still be able to successfully manage them with a lean and mean support staff?"

Solution: NCD and Global Village help to architect the right solution
Pratt and Sally Guinane, the hospital's director of information systems, contacted Global Village Systems, Inc., an NCD reseller and recognized leader in networking technology and server-based computing. He worked with Global Village Systems to

design a pilot program using thin-client terminals. Although this solution showed some promise, there was a fatal flaw. There was no guarantee that the new 32-bit Windows version of Meditech would run on a thin client.

The Medical Center of Aurora and Global Village Systems then turned to NCD's new software offering, NCD ThinPATH PC. This software enables a PC to function as a thin client, while still retaining the ability to function as a PC. Applications can be run locally or from a Citrix MetaFrame XP server farm. The PC can be completely administered by the IT staff remotely, using NCD's ThinPATH Management Portal.

Guinane made the decision to purchase 800 licenses of NCD ThinPATH PC, and the solution has worked so well that The Medical Center of Aurora plans to deploy the software on all 1500+ desktops at the medical center. Using NCD ThinPATH PC and NCD ThinPATH Management Portal to create what Pratt call a "thin PC environment," the IT team is able to deploy PCs throughout the organization that are remotely administered and controlled. The software allows them to easily manage the ever-increasing number of applications, and provide superior user support, all with a very small IT staff working in a highly distributed environment, consisting of three separate campuses.

Benefit: Managing PCs as thin clients to improve user experience and efficiency of IT support staff.
"NCD ThinPATH PC has already made us a much more efficient department," states Pratt. "The ability to set up and manage PCs from a centralized location is a huge advantage for us. We used to have to

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configure everything at the nurses' stations, but now we can deploy everything from our IT shop. We can set up 15 devices in 30 minutes. This causes a lot less aggravation for the nursing staff. We're not in their way, and we can begin training them as soon as we plug in. It's truly a plug and play solution."

Pratt also likes the flexibility of the ThinPATH PC shell, which makes it easier to customize access for each user. In a Windows 2000 environment, users either need passwords or their own domains. In Pratt's "thin PC" environment, the ThinPATH PC shell logs onto the desktop and gives users access to their local applications and Citrix MetaFrame-based applications.

This feature has greatly enhanced the user experience. For example, a nurse manager can now log onto her desktop from any of the ThinPATH PC terminals in the hospital – she doesn't necessarily need to return to her office to access her applications. Another example of improved usability – one of the secretaries formerly had to use two different types of terminals in two different locations – one for Meditech and one for MediBuy. Now she can access all her applications via a PC with ThinPATH PC at her desk.

"Many of the nursing staff are self-proclaimed computer novices," according to Pratt. "In fact, in a recent survey many of them rated themselves as having zero knowledge." They were not exaggerating. Pratt often fields questions such as 'how do you use a mouse?' "We installed the new PCs with ThinPATH PC software and gave them new, sleek, flat panel monitors to assist with the buy-in. Within five minutes they were saying, 'Wow, this is neat!' NCD

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In addition to an enhanced user experience and increased efficiencies for the IT department, NCD ThinPATH PC offers an important added benefit – increased security. "It's difficult to completely lock down a Windows 2000 desktop," comments Pratt. "This will reduce the damage that can be done either accidentally or purposefully, and will enhance the IT staff's control over the security and the terminals." ThinPATH PC may even enhance Pratt's and other hospital network administrators' ability to comply with HIPPA requirements.

"ThinPATH PC gives me more flexibility than a thin client terminal solution would have," concludes Pratt. "Another big advantage is the support I've received from NCD and Global Village Systems. I have been able to work closely with them to customize the software to my needs."

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