

Integrated Healthcare Provider Improves Patient Care Using WebEx

Sentara Healthcare reduces operation costs, increases staff productivity, and expands access to clinical expertise.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>SENTARA HEALTHCARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare IT Norfolk, Virginia Approximately 20,000 staff, doctors, physicians, and nurses
<p>BUSINESS CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to clinical expertise and knowledge within Sentara Dedicate more time to patient care by reducing meeting and travel time Provide off-site access to WebEx when staff is forced to travel Enhance patient care using innovative and collaboration based technologies
<p>NETWORK SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Cisco WebEx throughout all 100 healthcare facilities Outsource collaboration solution to provide more scalability
<p>BUSINESS RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced monthly operational meeting costs by 71 percent, resulting in approximately US\$1.37 million in annual savings Improved patient care and staff productivity due to increased collaboration Increased tumor board attendance by 100 percent

Business Challenge

In 2010, Sentara Healthcare was ranked the nation's top most integrated healthcare system by Modern Healthcare magazine. Sentara, a not-for-profit health system, operates more than 100 care-giving sites, including eight hospitals with a total of 1,911 beds, five outpatient care campuses, seven nursing centers, three assisted living centers, and nine advanced imaging centers, and is responsible for approximately 380 primary care and multi-specialty physicians. Sentara manages all facilities and staff from its central office located in Norfolk, Virginia.

Scheduling meetings in an efficient and effective manner for the Sentara staff, physicians, and nurses scattered across Virginia and North Carolina was difficult. On a monthly basis, more than 162 meetings were scheduled, with an average of only ten people attending each meeting. Sentara was spending an extraordinary amount of money on travel expenses, and its staff complained of low productivity due to the hours spent on the road. The rise in gas prices and

traffic surrounding Sentara's facilities further added to their frustration. Sentara needed to make a change to better accommodate its employees. The IT staff looked to desktop tools and technologies as part of a corporate initiative led by Sentara's chief technology officer to increase collaboration and eliminate superfluous spending.

Sentara's facilities are filled with qualified physicians, surgeons, and nurses, but they are scattered throughout Virginia and North Carolina. This made receiving help and advice from staff at other hospitals difficult and time consuming. Sentara is committed to providing high-quality patient care and knew that it needed to utilize all of its resources in order to best treat patients.

"We are challenged geographically, but we needed to facilitate collaboration between our departments. We needed a desktop collaboration and video conferencing tools to eliminate staff frustration and provide better patient care," says Betsy Meadows, director for Sentara Healthcare.

In addition, Sentara was concerned about managing the scalability of their network if they introduced a new video conferencing platform into their existing network. As such, officials decided to outsource the solution and selected Cisco WebEx for the job.

Network Solution

Based on the success of one department's use of the WebEx® solution and after a comparative analysis of other products, Sentara chose to implement a Cisco® WebEx platform in all of its facilities. Sentara was confident in the WebEx solution's performance and ability to deliver collaboration at all sites. The WebEx solution is easy to deploy and configure, and does not require integration at the customer site. Its intuitive interface and functions make the WebEx solution easy to use, because it requires minimal training and implementation costs. Also, Sentara previously had video conferencing only in its large conference rooms, which enabled just a limited number of employees to collaborate. The WebEx solution delivers video and collaboration to a desktop, enabling collaboration and video conferencing to all of Sentara's employees system-wide.

Following the installation, Sentara distributed an electronic communication to its employees explaining how the Cisco WebEx solution integrates audio, video, and web conferencing capabilities to give remote meetings a natural and effective in-person quality. The communication also described the direct employee benefits of using the solution, such as increased productivity, accelerated processes, and reduced travel times.

Sentara officials did not stop there. They continued to promote the new solution through a strategy to integrate the WebEx solution into the daily life of their employees. As part of this strategy, one-on-one training sessions were scheduled with executives over the course of three months to help them better understand how to integrate the technology into their day-to-day routines. Simultaneously, Sentara officials developed an internal website to provide employees with general information on the WebEx solution, including a basic introduction to the solution and on how to manage personal accounts.

"To make the training more efficient, quick reference guides were created for new users to reference during their initial WebEx meetings. Staff was also encouraged to practice before conducting their first meeting with an audience. This process quickly provided confidence in using the new product," says Greg Walkup, the product manager at Sentara who initiated the WebEx marketing and training.

"Sentara uses the WebEx solution clinically to enhance patient care, providing patients with multiple professional opinions without having to commute from one hospital to another."

— Betsy Meadows, Director, Sentara Healthcare

"Instead of just telling people about the new capabilities, we forced the issue. We went to administration to ask everyone to participate in online WebEx trainings and held one-on-one training sessions with high-level executives. We engaged the majority of staff at Sentara, and now hardly a day goes by when someone is not using the WebEx solution at their desktop," says Meadows.

Business Results

Since the deployment of the WebEx solution, Sentara officials have seen a positive reaction from its staff. There is less concern placed on traveling to meetings due to the video conferencing capabilities of the WebEx solution, and employees are able to focus more on providing better patient care than on administrative issues.

“Sentara uses the WebEx solution clinically to enhance patient care, providing patients with multiple professional opinions without having to commute from one hospital to another,” says Meadows.

For example, the Oncology Department at Sentara hosts tumor board discussions for different doctors to present new cancer cases. The board serves as a way for doctors, physicians, and nurses to obtain the opinions of doctors all over the United States and to collaborate on the best route for patient care. Due to geographic restrictions, doctors were previously not always able to make these meetings in person. However, now that the meetings are facilitated through the WebEx solution, doctors from Sentara’s seven hospitals and other locations are actively participating in the discussions. Overall, participation in these meetings has increased by 100 percent since the WebEx solution was introduced. “After some minimal training and a couple of meetings using the WebEx solution, the acceptance from the physicians was extremely positive,” says Walkup. “The WebEx solution makes presenting and consulting on cases more convenient for physicians, which in turn allows Sentara to offer better patient care.”

PRODUCT LIST

Voice and IP Communications
• Cisco WebEx Web Conferencing

The WebEx solution has enabled physicians to present their patients’ lab work, and medical history to relevant doctors to get their opinion on how to best to serve their patient. This provides patients with multiple opinions from multiple doctors after just one visit.

Doctors can present patient cases from virtually anywhere, and can share test results and medical records with their peers through desktop sharing via the WebEx solution. All online medical records are accessed through EPIC, an electronic media record system, which works in coordination with the WebEx solution and allows for records to be easily shared among physicians. This collaborative process is quickening patient care and allows doctors to maneuver between meetings and medical procedures more effectively. It also decreases travel time and gives them more time to focus on patient care.

On average, monthly meeting costs have decreased by 71 percent, resulting in approximately US\$1.37 million in annual savings. In addition, the solution is now being used by all levels of the organization. Originally, only executives were trained on the solution; however, today many Sentara employees are taking advantage of the benefits of the WebEx solution.

Sentara officials have witnessed a new trickle-down trend, from executives to nonexecutives, within their facilities. Onsite meetings have been replaced with WebEx meetings. Sentara Healthcare is now able to use the unified communications platform to help improve patient care and increase collaboration between doctors. The integrated solution is used in many different medical departments throughout the Sentara Healthcare system, including physician education, cancer administration, general administration, patient care, benefits administration, nursing administration, pharmacy administration, human resources, and physician practice services.

“I have been extremely pleased with the use of the WebEx solution,” says Dr. John M. Sayles, MD, a member of the Norfolk Surgical Group. “I began using it for a large multidisciplinary conference on cancer. It allowed us to bring in more participants and to easily view images from the electronic

medical record of patients. The support from the Sentara WebEx team has been excellent, and I plan to use this service for many other applications in the future such as our practice staff meetings.”

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco WebEx and WebEx solutions, go to:

<http://www.cisco/en/US/netsol/ns990/index.html>.



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