

South Side Chicago Hospital HR Takes to the Cloud

Easier Access Delivered, Security Ensured With Cloud-Based Document Management System

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Confidentiality.

It's the one word that is likely ever present on the minds of most Human Resources professionals. Typically entrusted with maintaining sensitive employee data, HR pros need to control that information while having the ability to get at it when they want it, while limiting access to those who shouldn't.

St. Bernard Hospital on Chicago's South Side faced that issue when the hospital's executive vice president wanted HR to go paperless. That decision weighed heavily on Donna Dertz, Director of Human Resources. She reacted as many HR professionals might.

"I told her, 'You can't touch my files'," she said with a laugh. "My first concern was with privacy. St. Bernard has over 900 employees and 150 physicians, and keeping their records confidential is of primary importance. I was very skeptical of how this would work."

Not that Dertz was unfamiliar with paperless access. The catalyst for change came from within St. Bernard. The 210-bed facility already uses the MEDITECH EHR system throughout the facility. But Dertz wanted assurances that the new content management system would be dedicated to HR, with strong safeguards that would only allow access by her staff.

Despite her reservations, Dertz recognized that the new system could make her job easier, but multiple business issues had to be addressed.

First, there was the paper, lots and lots of paper. Employee applications and their accompanying files can typically swell to upwards of 50 to 75 pages. She wanted to drive efficiency by reducing the time it takes to process and retrieve applications and other HR-related documents. Going digital would reduce the time it takes to manually retrieve documents from the existing physical storage, and would eliminate the need to pack them away in St. Bernard's warehouse.

Dertz also recognized the potential hazards of storing physical paper. The new system would need to provide a better solution for disaster recovery. As well, she wanted a more secure solution that would reduce access to non-HR employees.

Leveraging the Cloud

The focus on confidentiality and easier data access gets to the heart of what St. Bernard wanted to accomplish: having an efficient means to respond to regulatory and other ongoing medical industry requirements related to personnel.

"The new system needed to make getting our hands on specific information easier," said Dertz. "HR files can fill entire banker boxes. An e-file is far more convenient. If we receive requests for labor information, or the hospital updates its Joint Commission Accreditation materials, or an audit is performed, the ability to burn a disc versus searching a file box and then making copies makes my life easier."

After reviewing several technology companies, St. Bernard selected Integrated Document Technologies, Inc (IDT), Itasca, Ill., a technology consultant and integrator of ECM and ERP systems for small, mid-market and enterprise firms nationwide. IDT specified a proven, robust system that met each of St. Bernard's demands.

To supply the critical functionality Dertz was looking for – plus the benefit of rapid deployment -- IDT recommended a complete, Cloud-based system. It included Filebound from Upland Software, integrated document management and retrieval software with HR-specific workflow automation; CAPSYS CAPTURE ONLINE™, a full-featured data and document capture solution; and Epson scanners for inputting paper documents.

Initially, considering a Cloud-based system presented difficulties. Dertz and St. Bernard's IT group were cautious about potential hacking and data access, and security in general.

"Security is usually the top concern for Cloud systems, and IDT has addressed it with its choice of partners," said John Dobbins, Vice President of Sales. For data capture, CAPSYS Technologies offers its own secured data center for hosting content; or, companies can deploy the software in a Microsoft Windows Azure data center.

"Cloud systems offer many advantages: low upfront costs, no hardware or software to purchase, install and upgrade, no system administration by internal IT staff -- and of course, data security in the event of a disaster," he continues. The CAPSYS system is also unique, he adds, in that it is a distributed capture system – it can be used on demand, anywhere in the world from the convenience of a web browser.

After validating the security measures, Dertz warmed to the Cloud. "I want control over my records," she said. "Knowing where they are and getting the access we need is very important. But now that we have what I am confident is a secure system, I get my reassurance of safety, access and control."

Dertz notes that IDT designed a system that gave her what she needed, at a price the community hospital could afford. "Competitors didn't even come close. There was either no strong filing (indexing) component, or, the data back-ups were not secure."

Better Management of Diverse Data

The technology solution recommended by IDT was just what the doctor ordered.

High-volume scanners made easy work of St. Bernard's thick files. Dertz reports that her team can input paper files quickly and built its content management system with ease.

"The organizational capabilities of the new online data capture system are a huge win for us," said Dertz. "We can call up whole documents or drill down into sub-categories to see the specific information we need. It's like having our own internal search engine."

The system divvies up sections of the employee files for easy access: W4s, direct deposit information, internal notes, credentials, salary, signed job description, evaluations, classes taken, continuing education certificates, and licenses. Once entered, the HR staff can retrieve documents from a Web or Windows' based application.

Dertz particularly likes how all the forms the system creates are dated. She can now query the system to find information by date on the e-file.

Another advantage was new system's ability to communicate with St. Bernard's existing HRIS System. The integration is planned for the future.

Dertz is satisfied with how everything is operating, the effortless in which her team is able to access information, and how the system cuts down the likelihood of human error.

“When everything was on paper, we’d have to go to the file room, sift through the files, and dig out the required document. This time-consuming process required the gathering of numerous files and documents to review the information we needed. Now, we can search from our desktops,” she said.

Dertz plans a second phase where she will open part of the system to non-HR managers, a development she previously believed unthinkable. The new system will allow portions of files to be opened, reducing the demand on HR to fulfill personnel-related requests from other managers.

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