

Health Maintenance Organization Case Study



INTRODUCTION: WWII ship builders, Hoover Dam construction workers, and the first steelworkers located on the West Coast of the U.S. all benefited from one of the nation's first employer health programs. The original employer of that health plan is, today, one of the leading healthcare maintenance organizations (HMO) in North America. This HMO serves member health needs in nine states with 431 medical offices, 30 medical centers, and 12,000 physicians, employing 130,000 overall.

Not surprisingly, sophisticated technologies – from patient care to business process applications — serve as key components for the HMO's continued success as a highly efficient organization. Approximately 8000 IT professionals are employed to keep these systems smoothly running, with a minimum of interruptions as the constant goal.

NEED: With so many employees depending on technology to successfully perform their jobs, the HMO's IT department needed a reliable system to receive alerts of trouble tickets generated in the organization's help desk software application. Missed or delayed alerts resulted in repeated requests — and lengthy incident response times. What's more, management realized fast IT incident resolution was essential to uninterrupted patient care in their medical facilities, and business continuity throughout the organization. Because of this, management required real-time update and status of all trouble tickets.

PROBLEM: The HMO's technical support manager for Help Desk operations inherited a huge IT headache when he joined the organization six years ago.

"We had a legacy help desk system in place, but the paging software that was integrated with it was only sending about 80% of the generated trouble tickets," he recalled. "One of my primary projects when I came on board was to resolve this issue."

He continued, "The problem was the paging system we had in place didn't track message status, so we had no way of knowing if a page actually went through. We had to scroll through a lengthy log cross-comparing message numbers with a list of recent messages. If we didn't spot a message number, it meant we never got it. I estimate this manual process took individual IT personnel at least five hours a week to perform, so you can see how costly this became in lost administrative time." Since the paging software did not match message numbers with their carriers, it was also impossible to discern the source of missed pages. Additionally, the HMO's wireless alert system did not have the speed and scalability to grow along with the organization and handle an increasing number of wireless alerts — often as many as 9000 a day. And as the software only utilized TAP, the HMO couldn't take advantage of higher-speed SNPP and WCTP message protocols.

Individual PC, email, and network security problems make up the majority of trouble tickets, but interrupted patient care applications can be an occasional issue. Previously used paging software did not offer redundancy in the event of system failure, and management wanted this capability in place to avert any delayed stoppages in critical patient care and business applications.

Finally, when legacy help desk software was upgraded to the more powerful and feature rich Remedy Help Desk platform, a better wireless messaging application was needed to integrate with this key system.

“We needed a highly reliable wireless alert notification solution that could easily interface with Remedy Help Desk, grow with us as we added new employees and technologies, and provide reporting capabilities that would let IT immediately spot if a wireless alert didn’t go through,” the technical support manager summarized.

SOLUTION: In the past six years, the HMO has grown from 5000 to 8000 IT technical support employees. Because of this significant growth, the organization is pleased with the decision to replace the previous paging software with HipLink Solutions’ HipLink wireless messaging solution.

HipLink helped the HMO seamlessly integrate HipLink with the Remedy Help Desk system, allowing IT personnel and management to receive and check status of trouble tickets any time right from their pagers, cell phones, or Blackberries. And because HipLink can accommodate over 40,000 messages an hour, the wireless software has no trouble handling a widely varying number of messages — often as many as 9000 a day. What’s more, HipLink’ multiple protocol delivery capabilities assure messages are sent and received faster than ever, delivering wireless alerts of trouble ticket to over 8000 users through SNPP, TAP, and WCTP protocols.

“Without a doubt, HipLink has played a key role in decreasing incident response time and resolution,” the technical support manager affirmed. “Obviously, the software is extremely reliable, but its reporting capabilities let us track every message sent. Now we can quickly look up status, send time, and receiver for each message, and even view statistics that measure provider and protocol performance.”

As HipLink is a mission-critical application, the HMO has also added a redundant server that can take the load should one geographic location become unavailable. But in the six years to

date since HipLink was implemented, the dependable wireless software has never failed.

The HMO’s technical support manager concluded, “Not only has HipLink solved every messaging issue we had before, it’s the most reliable system we have going. We’ve never had an outage resulting from HipLink.”

OVERVIEW

Customer Profile

One of the largest HMO’s in America, serving member health needs in nine states with 431 medical offices, 30 medical centers, 12,000 physicians, and 130,000 employees overall.

Business Requirements

Legacy paging software had a successful send rate of only 80%. Message tracking could only be done manually and incident response time was too slow. Paging software needed to be replaced with a highly scalable, reliable wireless messaging system that could integrate with Remedy Help Desk, and receive and track up to 9000 trouble tickets a day to over 8000 users.

HipLink Solution

- Easy interface with Remedy Help Desk
- Can send over 40,000 messages an hour
- Multiple message protocol capabilities
- Redundancy at the carrier level
- Reporting statistics show time, status, provider, receiver for each message

Key Benefits

- Smooth integration prevents network and system disruptions
- Scalability accommodates added receivers and messengers
- Fast response to patient care and business application outages
- Increased reliability, decreased problem resolution time
- Management and IT stay aware of trouble ticket status



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