

Healthcare Services Firm Transforms Interactions with Physicians



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: CareCore National, LLC

Industry: Healthcare Insurance

Location: Bluffton, South Carolina

Size: 1,200 Employees

CHALLENGE

- Minimize physician burden to obtain prior authorization for procedures
- Help to lower healthcare system costs and improve quality of medical services
- Increase efficiency of organizational communications

SOLUTION

- Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise to route physician contacts to best available resource, and Cisco MediaSense to record interactions for later analysis
- Choice of collaboration methods for physicians, including Cisco Unified IP Phones, Cisco WebEx, and Cisco Jabber
- Video endpoints, including Cisco TelePresence Systems, Cisco Cius tablets, and Cisco Unified IP Phone 9900 Series

RESULTS

- Improved experience for physicians seeking prior authorization
- Collected 80 percent more data about outcomes without increasing burden for physicians
- Found trusted advisor to remain at forefront of rapidly changing industry

CareCore National introduced collaboration tools to lessen physician burden while gathering more data for decision support.

Challenge

CareCore National is a specialty benefits-management company that pioneered evidence-based medicine for treatments such as outpatient diagnostic and cardiac imaging, cardiac implantable devices, oncology drugs, therapeutic agents, radiation therapy, and sleep, pain, and lab services. The doctors and nurses who staff CareCore's contact center authorize procedures based on their historical effectiveness for similar patients. With each interaction, CareCore increases the size and value of decision-support systems that correlate symptoms, treatment pathways, and outcomes such as bed days or comfort levels.

CareCore currently has contracts with more than 25 health plan providers working with 600,000 physicians who provide care for 68.8 million people. "What differentiates CareCore is our ability to efficiently authorize an average of 45,000 cases daily and apply evidence-based medicine uniformly across our organization," says Doug Tardio, chief executive officer for CareCore National.

Until 2006, physicians who needed prior authorization for a procedure typically asked a nurse to call CareCore's contact center. A typical call took 4-6 minutes and was limited to one procedure. As CareCore began collecting data about the entire episode of care instead of a single office visit, the company sought a way to lessen the burden on physicians, leaving more time for patient care.

"We decided to apply advanced collaboration and business video technology to make it more convenient for physicians to interact with CareCore and provide more information," says William Moore, executive vice president and chief technology officer, CareCore National. "The 600,000 physicians we work with like to interact in different ways, so we wanted to provide flexible options."

"By lowering the burden for physicians to share data, Cisco collaboration tools enable us to collect more and better data on which to base care decisions."

— William Moore, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, CareCore National, LLC

Solution

CareCore has transformed the way that it interacts with physicians and authorizes procedures using Cisco® Unified Communications Manager, Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise, and a suite of Cisco collaboration tools. Physicians can now choose the collaboration method that best suits their workflow:

- Call the contact center to reach the right resource, the first time. CareCore uses Cisco MediaSense to capture contact center conversations to mine for business intelligence that continually improves care pathways.
- Use a Cisco Unified IP Phone to access an automated decision-support application. The phone's built-in display prompts for information and then shows authorized procedures. If the evidence indicates that a lab test is appropriate, for instance, the physician can proceed without prior authorization. Physicians who want to discuss cases can just click to connect to colleagues in CareCore's contact center.
- Use a Cisco Cius™ tablet with CareCore's MobileOp application. Physicians can use the application from anywhere to access the decision-support system. For quick answers to questions, physicians can touch a button to interact with a CareCore physician, either using Cisco Jabber™ for instant messaging or Cisco WebEx® for voice, video, and web sharing.
- Initiate an instant messaging chat or Cisco WebEx conference from a laptop or PC, using the Cisco Jabber UC Client.

CareCore also takes advantage of Cisco collaboration and video solutions internally, for efficient organizational communications. Employees use Cisco Jabber for instant messaging; Cisco WebEx Meeting Center for voice, video, and web collaboration; and Cisco WebEx Training Center. Application developers in three states keep a Cisco WebEx conference open all day, using chat to ask for input and sharing their desktops to jointly solve programming issues. High-quality video enables team members to see each other's facial expressions, making

communications more accurate. Similarly, IT team members who telework use Cisco WebEx to interact with their teammates in the network operations center, thanks to video cameras and microphones mounted in the room (see Technical Implementation). “When CareCore was smaller, we assumed people had to be in the same place to collaborate,” Moore says. “Cisco WebEx extends the village, letting us collaborate face-to-face from anywhere.”

All executives also have a Cisco Unified IP Phone 9900 Series, which provides high-definition audio as well as a large backlit, high-resolution, fully adjustable color display. “Even though I can walk to our chief financial officer’s office as quickly as dialing, we actually prefer to use our video phones while joining a Cisco WebEx session to share documents,” Moore says. “Sharing documents on our own desktops is more comfortable than looking over each other’s shoulders.”

For an in-person experience with customers and vendor without travel, CareCore executives use AT&T’s business-to-business Cisco TelePresence® Service. The company’s medical directors can join the meeting from their offices using Cisco TelePresence EX90 Systems or from the road using Cius tablets. Cisco Services provided planning and implementation services for Cisco TelePresence.

Results

Toward Excellent Care Quality and Lower Healthcare System Costs

Access to sophisticated pathways has the potential to lower healthcare costs by reducing bed days and redundant tests. “Giving physicians access to the data that helps them do the right procedure first reduces unnecessary healthcare costs and improves quality of care,” says Matt Cunningham, CareCore’s senior vice president for information technology. “It’s not a matter of rationing care; it’s a matter of making sure the right care is given at the right time.”

“Cisco collaboration tools have helped reduce the time for physicians to connect to a CareCore physician from about 90 seconds to 60 seconds, significantly improving the experience.”

— Matt Cunningham, Senior Vice President for IT, CareCore National, LLC

The company projects that Cisco Unified Communications and collaboration solutions will help it collect 9 billion instead of 5 billion pieces of information about treatment and outcomes (an 80 percent increase) without more effort from physicians. “With a traditional call center or web portal, collecting the quantity of data we do would require a 30-60 minute interaction, which is not practical,” says Moore. “By lowering the burden for physicians to share data, Cisco collaboration tools enable us to collect more and better data on which to base decisions.”

Improved Physician Experience

Physicians are embracing CareCore’s new collaboration options. “Cisco collaboration tools have helped reduce the time for physicians to connect to CareCore physicians from about 90 seconds to 60 seconds, significantly improving the experience,” says Cunningham. Call-handling time is also faster, because the high-speed Cisco data center network accelerated record retrieval from as much as 15 seconds to less than 1 second, helping agents respond to 20 percent more calls. “Physicians appreciate spending as little time as possible making sure their services will be paid for so that they can spend more time seeing patients,” says Dr. Bartley Bryt, CareCore’s executive vice president for product development.

Many physicians also appreciate the option to interact with video, from their desktops or using Cius tablets. “A peer-to-peer video interaction between two physicians is infinitely more valuable than simply dialing an 800 number to talk on the phone,” says Moore. “Emotions that are portrayed with body language are important when two highly trained professionals work together to plan the best healthcare course for an individual.”

Enhanced Organization Communications

Internal communications are also more efficient and effective. One reason is that CareCore employees, two-thirds of whom work remotely, can now collaborate from anywhere, using any device. One meeting participant might join a Cisco WebEx conference using a Cisco Cius tablet, while others use Cisco Jabber on a Cisco TelePresence EX90 System, Mac, Windows PC, or iPad.

Growing use of video for meetings, important messages, and training also improves communications. For example, to keep employees up to date on constantly changing contracts with payers, many CareCore executives now record short videos using their PC or laptop camera instead of taking much longer to write memos. With a click, Cisco MXE Media Experience Engine 3500 transforms the video for web viewing and publishes it on Cisco Show and Share[®], an enterprise webcasting and video-sharing application for live and recorded video content.

Trusted Advisor to Remain Agile in Rapidly Changing Industry

Cisco Services looks to its Cisco Services engineers for new ideas for increasing the value of the business video investment. One recommendation was to implement Cisco Digital Signs in hospital emergency rooms to inform patients of lower-cost care options in an attention-getting fashion. The solution is operating in several hospitals in Northern California.

“We have a consultative relationship with Cisco Services,” Moore says. “Before we make a decision about any of our Cisco technologies, from data center to unified communications to telepresence, Cisco Services advises us about the potential impact on our network and data center, helping us meet business objectives with minimal disruption.”

Next Steps

CareCore continues to add collaboration applications that reduce the burden on physicians and facilitate more efficient service delivery. Near-term plans include Cisco Intelligent Contact Management and Cisco Unified Customer Voice Portal, which will give physicians a self-service option to retrieve information by pressing phone keys or speaking natural voice commands.

In 2012, CareCore, Cisco, and UnitedHealth Group plan to introduce the Cisco Health Services Exchange (HSX), a cloud service where benefits plans, payers, and physicians can store and share electronic medical records (EMRs) and access physician services such as scheduling and transcription. The HSX will have two components: a private cloud on CareCore’s premises hosted on the Cisco Unified Computing System[™] (UCS[™]), and a public cloud with scalable compute, storage, and network resources, hosted by Cisco. [Kristi Gage review] Providers and payers will benefit from easy access to electronic health records and CareCore’s evidence-based medicine databases. Consumers, in turn, are expected to experience improved quality of care because different healthcare organizations can share information.

Technical Implementation

To make sure physicians can reach CareCore even in the event of a server or data center outage, CareCore deployed redundant Cisco Unified Communications Manager servers in different locations. Each server can automatically failover to the other, providing business continuity.



PRODUCTS AND SERVICES LIST

Voice and Unified Communications

- [Cisco Unified Communications Manager 8.1](#)
- [Cisco Unified IP Phone 7900 Series](#) and [9900 Series](#)
- [Cisco Unity® Connection](#)
- [Cisco Cius](#)
- [Cisco Jabber Clients for Cius, Windows, Mac, iPad, and iPhone](#)

Conferencing

- [Cisco WebEx Meeting Center](#)
- [Cisco WebEx Training Center](#)

Customer Collaboration

- [Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise](#)
- [Cisco MediaSense](#)

Telepresence

- [Cisco TelePresence System 1300](#)
- [Cisco TelePresence System EX90](#)

Video Content

- [Cisco Show and Share](#)
- [Cisco Digital Signs](#)
- [Cisco MXE Media Experience Engine 3500](#)

Data Center

Vblock 700

- Cisco Unified Computing System with Cisco UCS B200 M2 Blade Servers
- Cisco Nexus® 7010, 5020, and 1000V Switches
- EMC Symmetrix VMAX Storage
- VMware vSphere 4
- VMware View

Services

- [Cisco Planning and Design Services](#)

All Cisco Unified Communications and collaboration applications are hosted on a Cisco Unified Computing System in CareCore's data center, minimizing data center space, power, and cooling requirements. "If we had implemented the Cisco Unified Communications environment on a platform other than the Cisco UCS, we'd need two to three times the amount of space," says Dennis Bassinger, manager of network operations for CareCore. The Cisco UCS also hosts virtual desktops that contact center agents access from thin clients. Virtual desktops minimize desktop costs and allow agents to work from anywhere.

Cisco WebEx and a custom audio-visual setup enable remote IT team members to collaborate with people who are physically present in the network operations center. Microphones are mounted throughout the room, and cameras stream live video from the room so that remote participants can see facial expressions, body language, and activities. People physically present in the room are able to view remote participants on large video displays that are part of the Cisco Digital Signs solution. Different locations within the room are dedicated to various IT specializations such as databases, servers, and cybersecurity.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Collaboration, visit:

<http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration>.

To find out more about Cisco Services, visit:

<http://www.cisco.com/go/advancedservices>.

To find out more about Cisco solutions for healthcare, visit:

<http://www.cisco.com/go/healthcare>.

To join conversations and share best practices about collaboration, visit:

<http://www.cisco.com/go/joinconversation>.




Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.
Singapore

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV Amsterdam,
The Netherlands

Cisco has more than 200 offices worldwide. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco Website at www.cisco.com/go/offices.

 Cisco and the Cisco logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Cisco and/or its affiliates in the U.S. and other countries. To view a list of Cisco trademarks, go to this URL: www.cisco.com/go/trademarks. Third party trademarks mentioned are the property of their respective owners. The use of the word partner does not imply a partnership relationship between Cisco and any other company. (1110R)

Printed in USA