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Healthcare Industry Cannot Keep Up With Demand

Tom Cordell, President of Spectrum Communications, Explains How Healthcare Organizations Must Adopt New Technology to Meet Patient Needs

SANTA FE/ALBUQUERQUE, NM — September 4, 2008 — Unless you've lived on a deserted island for the past several years, you know that the growth of the healthcare industry and related services has literally exploded. The demand for services in this sector is so overwhelming that companies cannot keep up. Institutions, hospitals, and medical offices are busting at the seams and unfortunately most are unaware of the latest technology that can dramatically help them become more efficient, more profitable and better prepared to fulfill patient needs in an effective manner.

Healthcare is among the fastest-growing industries in the U.S. economy. According to BLS projections, 8 of the top 20 fastest-growing occupations are in healthcare, and the industry is also expected to lead in new wage and salary job creation -- generating some 3.6 million between 2004 and 2014. Several factors are spurring this rapid growth. The number of people in older age groups, with much greater than average healthcare needs, will grow faster than the total population between 2004 and 2014; as a result, the demand for healthcare will increase. Employment in home healthcare, nursing and residential care will increase rapidly as life expectancies rise, and as aging children are less able to care for their parents and rely more on long-term care facilities.

Furthermore, advances in medical technology will continue to improve the survival rate of severely ill and injured patients, who will then need extensive therapy and care. New technologies will make it possible to identify and treat conditions that were previously not treatable. Network operations centers will be staffed with doctors and trained professionals to diagnose and prescribe procedures as well as medications to patients located worldwide. Medical group practices and integrated health systems will become larger and more complex, increasing the need for office and administrative support workers. Industry growth also will occur as a result of the shift from inpatient to less expensive outpatient and home healthcare because of improvements in diagnostic tests and surgical procedures, along with patients' desires to be treated at home.

In order for the players in this industry to prosper, meet demand, and ultimately save lives new technologies must be implemented. There is a variety of technologies that have only scratched the surface in regards to their utilization. Every organization needs to be aware of the latest advancements because of the impact they will have on patient care and their viability as a business. A few examples of these technologies include high definition videoconferencing, managed IT services, and IP video solutions.

Healthcare professionals understand the potential to improve access to medical services through telemedicine, but the poor quality and high cost of legacy videoconferencing systems has limited clinical application. Distance poses a special challenge for health care. How do you connect a patient to the right specialist many miles away? How can a team of caregivers meet to develop a treatment plan? Distance and time are major barriers to better healthcare. However; recent advancements in high definition technology enable healthcare professionals to see patients otherwise beyond their reach and to connect patients to clinicians at different medical facilities, making healthcare more accessible to everyone. High definition solutions enable patient consultations with specialists far

away in central diagnostic centers. A referring physician and a specialist can view patient records and X-rays simultaneously via data sharing while examining the patient on a separate screen. Additional input from off-site experts can result in earlier diagnosis and quicker care.

Running an efficient data network is not easy either regardless of the industry, especially with the convergence of voice and data. Too often companies are caught up in day-to-day operations that mission-critical network maintenance and security management get overlooked. In today's environment, healthcare organizations cannot afford to let their guard down, especially with sensitive patient information that they collect and transmit both internally and externally. There are too many threats and other issues that plague network integrity and performance. So what are companies supposed to do? One answer is to outsource the management of their network IT services.

Essentially, managed IT services are designed to assist in maintaining and supporting the network and IT infrastructure. Types of services include remote network monitoring and reporting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, firewall monitoring, intrusion detection, patch assessment and vulnerability scanning, preventative tasks, disaster recovery, data backup and regular performance analysis. The strategic process was developed to give a 360 degree view of the network at all times to ensure optimal use. As we all know, the network is the backbone of a business and if it's not managed correctly employee productivity and profitability rapidly declines. Outsourcing the management of a network makes sense because it has nothing to do with the core competency of a healthcare organization.

One of the latest innovations spawned by the Internet that's rapidly gaining popularity is IP video. This phenomenal tool connects IP cameras to the Internet so one can view just about anything from any location around the world in real-time. IP video is having a tremendous impact on the ability to protect patients, ensure that medication is delivered properly, collect valuable information to support against fraudulent lawsuits, identify visitors and employees, monitor hazardous work areas, and thwart theft. Companies want to protect their most important assets and IP-based video technology gives them the power to do that at the click of a button.

Healthcare will remain the fastest growing industry for quite sometime. Organizations from the local dentist to hospitals with large campuses need to take a hard look at the latest technology to meet overwhelming demand. The first step is to partner with the right business communications provider that understands HIPPA requirements, takes a global approach to technology, and offers guidance that transfer value all the way through the chain to the end user. This is an exciting time in both healthcare and technology and the success of the former depends on the latter.

ABOUT SPECTRUM COMMUNICATIONS

Founded in 1985, Spectrum Communications is a locally owned, full-service technology company servicing New Mexico with offices in Santa Fe (505) 474-4100 and Albuquerque (505) 888-6464. As technology marches on, digital voice and data networks have "converged" into integrated computer/telecommunications systems that offer many advantages versus traditional analog telephone systems. By employing these latest technological advances, businesses will help to ensure their success – improving their productivity and increasing their "bottom line". Spectrum Communications evaluates the communications needs of its customers/partners and implements customized state-of-the-art technology solutions. Through emerging technology we help our clients gain a competitive edge and increase their revenues.

To implement these solutions, Spectrum Communications employs staff who are licensed and certified and are experienced in the installation and repair of low-voltage cabling, traditional telephone and voice mail systems. Spectrum holds a New Mexico Contractor license and is insured and bonded. Spectrum is a Microsoft Partner and a certified dealer for ShoreTel (pure VOIP solutions), NEC (converged solutions) and Vodavi (traditional), offering communications systems that can accommodate large VoIP solutions with multiple sites. Customers are thoroughly trained in every component of their system by Spectrum Communications highly experienced customer service team.

The company's local dispatch center delivers round-the clock service to ensure system reliability. Spectrum Communications also offers comprehensive service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and emergency service guaranteed within 2 hours.

For more information on Spectrum Communications, call (505) 474-4100 or visit www.spectrum-nm.com.