Case study
TeamHealth

» We had to find a way to improve that process and get those paper records into our electronic workflows «

Mike Gager, EDM Operations Director, TeamHealth

The challenge

Despite a mostly digitized workflow with electronic records, many of TeamHealth's customers still submitted patient information in paper form. They were sustaining rapid growth, and had to find a way to on-board the high volumes of paper records into their EMR system, fast.

The solution

Fujitsu scanners' simple user interface and seamless integration into existing processes allowed TeamHealth to tackle its workflow challenges. The robust, yet easy-to-use equipment enabled even new employees to manage large volumes of paper. Time and cost savings were realized immediately across the entire organization, from the emergency department to the HR department.

The customer

Founded in 1979, TeamHealth helps healthcare organizations respond to the wide range of challenges they face in terms of financial performance, healthcare reform, evolving government mandates and personnel shortages. Originally founded to deliver emergency department (ED) administrative and staffing services, the Knoxville, Tennessee-based company has grown rapidly over recent years into one of the country's largest providers of hospital-based clinical outsourcing.

The challenge

Can a company virtually eliminate its paper profile in the midst of a rapid growth cycle? For TeamHealth the answer would be, "No problem!" The quickly expanding health professional outsourcing firm has not only eliminated the use of paper for physical transfer and storage with an electronic processing and billing workflow, it also paid off its investment in document scanners in less than two years!

"We're one of the nation's largest ED provider out sourcers and staff emergency rooms across the country with physicians and allied health clinicians to service those facilities," explains EDM Operations Director Mike Gager.

TeamHealth codes and bills for all of its provider encounters. When a physician or allied health clinician see a patient at a partner facility, TeamHealth receives the patient's medical records from the facility describing the visit and the health issues the provider addressed. Accordingly, TeamHealth submits claims to the insurance companies to get paid for providing those services.

Until 2007 only paper records were used. The TeamHealth physician or healthcare professional would write down each patient's issues and put the document in a file, which was then copied and sent to the TeamHealth billing operation. That system worked fine for a while, but the backlog of paper and its storage costs were growing. By 2007 and 2008 a rising number of TeamHealth's largest customers were beginning to use electronic records.

This transition posed a major challenge because many of Team-Health's smaller customers were still working with paper. To maintain an internal record for its operational coding workflow and keep its internal workflow efficient, TeamHealth had to replace its manual paper workflow with an electronic one.

"We still had millions of paper records coming to us," remembers Gager. "We had to find a way to improve that process and get those paper records into our electronic workflows."

Staying disciplined was key. TeamHealth set a goal to take all new facility partners directly into the new electronic workflow while ntinuing to whittle down the large backlog of existing facility partners. Complicating the issue was TeamHealth's rapid growth. At the onset of the project in 2007, TeamHealth was processing millions of paper charts per year. Since that time, chart volume has nearly tripled. Training new employees was a constant challenge as was building the systems to confirm records were captured correctly and verified in the system.

The benefit

- Fujitsu scanners provided a compact, high-performance solution
- Cut-and-paste strategy reduced implementation time
- Billing time reduced by 25 percent
- ROI in less than two years
- Scanners exceeded all reliability requirements

Products and services

- FUJITSU Image Scanner fi-6140Z
- FUJITSU Image Scanner fi-5900

The Solution

TeamHealth worked with KeyMark, a major reseller of document management solutions based in Liberty, S.C., to come up with an on-site scanning solution. The solution would have to meet a number of stringent and sometimes conflicting requirements. TeamHealth's on-site coordinators, who would be responsible for document scanning, typically worked with very little office space. Often times, they only had a locked drawer or cabinet to store their   equipment, so the solution had to be desktop oriented and very compact. "The coordinators often share space with others so it had to be small enough to fit in a drawer or occupy very little desktop space," says Gager.

"We needed to move through a stack of paper pretty quickly," says Gager. Reliability was also a high priority. "They needed the scanners to handle the heavy duty cycles because charts come in every day," said Gager. At the same time, TeamHealth needed a document scanning solution that would produce a high-quality image so that billing staff could clearly read the document. Duplex scanning was essential as well.

To meet these challenging requirements, KeyMark suggested the FUJITSU Document Scanner fi-6140Z. Introduced in 2007,this innovative workgroup scanner integrated excellent performance with robust reliability. The fi-6140Z supported scanning speeds up to 60 pages per minute with an image resolution ranging up to 600 dpi, and a duty cycle of up to 4,000 pages per day.

Image resolution ranged up to 600 dpi. An advanced document feeding system reduced document preparation time while an ultrasonic double-feed detection system automatically detected when two pages were simultaneously fed through the scanner. To eliminate the initial massive backload of paper, KeyMark brought in a half dozen FUJITSU Document Scanner fi-5900s (a powerful production level scanner) and ran them on 12-hour shifts. Six months later the paperback load was eliminated!

Along the way the TeamHealth group found other internal opportunities, particularly in HR, to eliminate paper.
"During the entire multi-year project, the Fujitsu scanners never failed. The value of the product has been tremendous," says Gager. "I've never had anyone from management question me about going to another scanner."

To complement the fi-5900, KeyMark representatives also recommended software from Kofax and OnBase, a leading enterprise content management software solution from Hyland.

The benefit

Today, TeamHealth has 80 to 100 Fujitsu scanners working on this project including a number of new FUJITSU Document Scanner fi-7160s. With implementations around the country, one helpful strategy has been what Gager calls a "cut-and-paste" approach. "We used the fi-6140Z scanner and cut-and-paste templates so we could get up and running really quickly," he explained. "It allowed us to deploy much quicker and get people into our electronic workflow faster."

Were there challenges along the way? "Absolutely," saysGager. "There were lots of questions working with so many different partners and customers," he says, recalling that each hospital was different in its processes and no two hospitals were alike. "It was hard to get everyone on the same page, "he says. "Probably the biggest challenge was keeping them any implementations consistent and accurate so that each was as smooth and repeatable as possible.

"Despite the challenges, the payoff was worth the effort. Gager says an initial study pegged the ROI at less than two years. However, the real value of the project was getting everything into a central workflow and taking advantage of operational efficiencies. "The bulk of our expenses are not the coordinators at the sites," he says. "It's in the higher paid personnel who perform complex tasks like coding the documents." Improving the productivity of a larger group of personnel serving hundreds of customers offers tremendous dividends. "If I can save just 3 or 4 percent by having a more efficient electronic process, the project more than pays for itself."

Contact

Fujitsu Computer Products of America, Inc.
Address: 1250 East Arques Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94085-4701
Phone: (888)425-8228
E-mail: info@fcpa.fujitsu.com
Website: http://us.fujitsu.com/fcpa