

Case Study: Community General Hospital of Syracuse

Better Security, More Control, and HIPAA Compliance



Community General Hospital

Community General Hospital is a general practice, 350 bed community hospital located in Syracuse, New York. It has a small IT staff that is good at what it does, but it is also stretched thin. Community General has as many as 30 unique software installations onsite.

Community General's Challenges

Like most healthcare facilities, Community General is challenged with leveraging technology to provide better patient care. With as many as 30 unique software installations onsite, minimizing downtime, service interruptions, and support costs are all important. One way to meet these challenges is to enable remote service and support for its software whenever possible, but with a small IT staff, minimizing IT involvement is imperative. Of course, as a healthcare facility, Community General must comply with HIPAA. According to Community General's Jack Hennessy, costs and security are the IT department's biggest issues.

Community General's Initial Attempts

When it came to enabling remote access for service and support, Community General has tried several methods. Dedicated frame relays were one option, but those became cost prohibitive. Dial up, another of the hospital's options, fell out of favor due to extensive IT involvement in managing access requests and passwords and the lack of meaningful reporting. With security as a priority, the hospital's IT department wanted to know who was accessing its network, why they were accessing it, and what was being done. Finally, branch tunnel connections, while secure, were hardware restricted and expensive to maintain, requiring expertise that was not on staff. Clearly, Community General needed a better solution, and when one of its software vendors introduced the IT staff to a SecureLink™ Virtual Support Network from Enexity, they were anxious to give it a try.

The SecureLink VSN Solution

When Community General's IT staff investigated SecureLink, they immediately liked what they saw. Among SecureLink's many benefits were its flexible access controls, the reduced IT involvement, and its real time session monitoring capabilities as well as the ability to generate historical audit trails and detailed log files. Ultimately, the IT staff realized that SecureLink worked like an on demand VPN with extensive auditing and reporting capabilities, but without the infrastructure, maintenance, or administrative headaches. The hospital also liked SecureLink's direct, native access to the server, which allowed its software vendor's service representatives to use all their favorite and sometimes proprietary resolution tools, minimizing downtimes.

Community General's Results with SecureLink

Once the hospital's IT staff began using SecureLink, they found it to be more secure than other methodologies they had tried. Its flexible access controls put the IT department in control, allowing access to be granted appropriate to the service issue, and access restricted both as to time and scope. Using SecureLink, the hospital's IT department found it could handle requests for access to their network more quickly and efficiently, minimizing IT involvement. The hospital's staff also loved the innate ability to comply with HIPAA provided through the real time session monitoring, historical audit trails, and detailed log files. The hospital also saw decreased downtime and less software service interruptions due to SecureLink's effectiveness as a remote access tool. Better software performance with elevated security, robust monitoring and reporting and reduced IT involvement resulted in as one Community General IT professional put it "a greatly enhanced overall customer experience."

"We were excited to learn about SecureLink. It solved so many of our problems. It's very secure, it minimizes our staff's involvement, and it has lowered our cost of doing business. We would like all our software vendors to use SecureLink, and we are going to encourage them to do so."

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