



» Detroit Medical Center:
Improving call center performance
with HiPath ProCenter «

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» Summary «

Established in 1985, the Detroit Medical Center (DMC) is the academic health center for Wayne State University and its schools of medicine, nursing and allied health services and a leading regional health care system, which operates 10 hospitals and institutions. DMC facilities are committed to providing not only top-notch health care for patients, but exceptional support services for patients, families, health care professionals and the community in general. A key service is providing efficient response to inquiries to DMC's call centers.

The task:

In March, 2004, a new Executive Management Team came on board and decided to re-create a central corporate call center that would handle all types of calls from the community, because the previous decentralization had a negative impact on the call center. The problem was so bad, that the medical center was losing patients and medical personnel to competing healthcare providers in the area. At the same time, executives realized they needed to improve the medical center's communications system, which consisted of outmoded equipment that lacked modern call center features such as statistical reporting, and did not meet DMC's objectives for providing excellent customer service.

The solution:

- HiPath ProCenter Suites with intelligent skills-based routing and extensive real-time management reporting capabilities
- HiPath IPortal to upgrade the call center without having to replace the entire telecommunications infrastructure

The benefits:

- With the skills-based routing capability provided by the system, callers are now connected to the call center representative or nurse with the best skills to handle the call
- The system generates detailed, real-time reports on calling trends and the performance of the call center, so that senior executives from throughout the system can view the data to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the center and make any needed changes
- Because of the greater efficiencies and additional revenue opportunities, the investment paid for itself in a matter of months – in fact, revenue in the month following the call center implementation increased more than 31%.
- By exploring the multimedia capabilities, including e-mail, Web chat and video the call center will be able to leverage a larger pool of workers during busy calling times

» "We've been able to improve our overall level of customer service significantly."

Kathleen Ingalls-Hefni
Corporate director
DMC Health Access Center



» Improving call center performance and customer satisfaction with help from HiPath ProCenter «

Established as a nonprofit corporation in 1985, the Detroit Medical Center (DMC) is a leading regional health care system with a mission of excellence in clinical care, research and medical education. DMC is the academic health center for Wayne State University and its schools of medicine, nursing and allied health services. Wayne State University School of Medicine is one of the largest medical schools in the United States.

The Detroit Medical Center operates 10 hospitals and institutions, including Children's Hospital of Michigan, Detroit Receiving Hospital and University Health Center, Harper University Hospital, Huron Valley-Sinai Hospital, Hutzel Women's Hospital, Michigan Orthopaedic Specialty Hospital, Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan, Sinai-Grace Hospital, Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute and Kresge Eye Institute.

DMC facilities are committed to providing not only top-notch health care for patients, but exceptional support services for patients, families, health care professionals and the community in general. A key service is providing efficient response to inquiries to DMC's call centers.

Provide more effective support services to patients, families, physicians, and the community

For the first three months of 2004, after twelve years of a centralized call center, the DMC switched to a decentralized environment with each hospital providing a separate call center to serve the overall community. In March, 2004, a new Executive Management Team came on board and changed this course, when they were made aware that decentralization had a negative impact on the call center. When people called the medical center's main phone number to schedule appointments, get information or speak with a health care professional, they encountered a complex and inefficient

communications system that offered nine different prompts for the various DMC facilities. This was confusing and frustrating to callers.

"We started losing about 50 percent of our calls," said Kathleen Ingalls-Hefni, corporate director of the DMC Health Access Center. "People would listen to the prompts and drop off." Even physicians were having difficulty getting through. The problem was so bad, Ingalls-Hefni said, that the medical center was losing patients and medical personnel to competing healthcare providers in the area.

Executives at DMC knew they had to improve customer service in order to maintain a good image in the community and keep staff from leaving for other facilities. They decided to re-create a central corporate call center that would handle all types of calls from the community. In addition, they took a hospital-based department that handled central scheduling for radiology and diagnostic testing and added that additional service to the existing call center operation.

At the same time, executives realized they needed to improve the medical center's communications system, which consisted of outmoded equipment that lacked modern call center features such as statistical reporting, and did not meet DMC's objectives for providing excellent customer service.

"We knew we would need to upgrade our systems in order to offer a world-class call center operation and let the community know we were committed to providing outstanding customer service," said Ingalls-Hefni. "Specifically, we wanted to route callers to the proper call center agent so people could get assistance quickly and effectively."

Siemens HiPath IPortal with HiPath ProCenter delivers skills-based routing, detailed call reporting and other key features to DMC's call center

DMC evaluated several different products and vendors, and selected Siemens HiPath ProCenter Suites. The solution features intelligent skills-based routing, so customers can be quickly connected to the best-matched service agent based on pre-defined profiles.

For each incoming call, multiple requirements are identified to facilitate efficient routing to the most appropriate agent. The information needed to match the caller to the agent can come from a variety of sources, including calling-party information, dialed numbers, voice prompting selections, interactive voice response system data inputs or customer databases. Information on each representative's skills – including specific knowledge, training, or experience is stored in a skills database.

DMC also needed HiPath ProCenter's extensive real-time management reporting capabilities. Graphical on-screen reports enable managers to assess how well callers are being matched with appropriately-skilled employees, how long calls take to resolve, and the actual business outcome of each contact. The system produces detailed historical reports that pertain to all aspects of the call center's activities. HiPath ProCenter has been deployed at DMC on Siemens HiPath IPortal solution. The HiPath IPortal has allowed DMC to upgrade their call center without having to replace their entire telecommunications infrastructure. The HiPath IPortal seamlessly connects to the existing DMC Centrex system and can easily expand to provide IP-enabled applications and desktops when DMC is ready.



» Enhanced DMC call center sees increased revenue, decreased abandon rates, improved customer sat and an ROI in less than 4 months «

The implementation of HiPath ProCenter has led to immediate improvements in DMC's call center performance and its ability to respond to the needs of the community. Call volumes in the center have gone from an average of 7,000 calls per month to more than 28,000 calls per month, and call abandon rates have decreased sharply.

With the skills-based routing capability provided by the system, DMC is now assured that callers are connected to the call center representative or nurse with the best skills to handle the call. Callers are routed to people trained to set up appointments, provide physician referrals and give health care advice.

"Just the ability to route properly has helped us to reduce dropped calls; and the number of abandoned calls continues to drop," said Ingalls-Hefni. "We've been able to improve our overall level of customer service significantly." The average wait time for a caller has steadily fallen, she said.

When people call in to the medical center, the first prompt they hear is for scheduling appointments at a medical facility, the most common reason for calls, Ingalls-Hefni said. The next prompt is for physician referrals, followed by nurse triage. Advisors can see on the screen what types of calls are coming in and immediately assign them to the appropriate person.

The system generates detailed, real-time reports on calling trends and the performance of the call center. These reports are stored in a database and senior executives from throughout the system can view the data via a dashboard to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the center and make any needed changes.

"It's important to be able to get those reports in real-time fashion and on a daily basis, so that we can react quickly," Ingalls-Hefni said. Analysis of this data can help managers determine if the center needs increased staff at particular times to handle high call volumes.

Customer service representatives also have access to some of the reporting data, so they can see what's happening with call trends and response levels. "We give them a means to gauge for themselves what the expectations are and whether they are meeting those standards," Ingalls-Hefni said. She says DMC is considering an incentive program to reward staffers for meeting certain performance benchmarks, she added.

DMC executives say the vastly improved service levels are helping the medical center maintain a high level of customer satisfaction. They believe the enhancements will also help attract specialists such as cardiologists to the center, and that will in turn lead to improved care and increased revenue opportunities for DMC. Because of the greater efficiencies and additional revenue opportunities, the investment in HiPath ProCenter paid for itself in a matter of months, Ingalls-Hefni said. In fact, revenue in the month following the call center implementation increased more than 31%.

The medical center recently launched a field trial of the latest release of HiPath ProCenter and is exploring its multimedia capabilities, including e-mail, Web chat and video. Through these various upgrades, the call center will be able to leverage a larger pool of workers during busy calling times. Some call center staffers will be able to work from home when they are unable to get to the call center, particularly during emergencies, Ingalls-Hefni said.

