

Integrated Customer Care Provides Added Value

“Life,” the customer care solution from Siemens, supports customers in obtaining the maximum return on their investment.

By Denise Fries

For medicine to reach and maintain a high standard of quality, research has to continue moving forward. Inventiveness, curiosity, and the thirst for knowledge have always produced the component that moves humanity forward: innovation. It was and remains the driving force in medical technology. Who

would have thought it possible one hundred years ago that Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen's discovery of X-rays would set a process in motion marking the beginning of diagnostic imaging. Innovative minds soon invented the first radiography device, produced computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging, developed positron emission tomography – every new modality represented a quantum leap in diagnostic imaging and therapy – a true blessing for physicians and patients.

Expanding Proficiencies

Siemens has always been closely linked to this tradition of research. The Medical division invests more than \$650 million annually to ensure that innovations always stay a step ahead of the present state of technology. These innovations not only provide clinical and medical advantages, they also result in economic benefits. However, if part of this

»Our customers have to think economically. With Life, we offer them the opportunity to leverage their investments better and more efficiently.«

Dr. Patrick Amarteifio, Project Manager for the Customer Care Program, Siemens Medical Solutions



FROM THE PURCHASE through the entire lifecycle of the system, Life provides the appropriate solution, enabling personnel and technology to remain on the cutting edge. This increases productivity.

potential is not used, the risk of stagnancy sets in – and that may even mean a step backwards. To prevent this, Siemens Medical Solutions has established a customer care program called Life. It works where it can be most effective: at the interface between users, administration, and the manufacturer.

Learn, Grow and Share

Every technological advancement, every development that brings benefits, is worthless if one does not know how to work with it. Siemens has made this basic principle a part of Life. “Knowledge brings improvements and accelerates processes,” is the motto. To keep the customer’s knowledge on the latest technologies up-to-date, Life provides a range of programs and services that enable users and administrators to get the maximum from their systems. From introductory training through applications support, experienced Siemens employees

and independent physicians stand by hospital personnel and physicians, whether operating their new MRI system for the first time, processing a CT scan at the workstation, or refining system handling.

Whether training is performed on-site or through web-based courses that can be taken anytime, anywhere, whether knowledge is kept up-to-date through specialized customer magazines or through workshops and symposia, Life always provides the optimum solution for every need, situation, and objective.

Share Best Practices

Life is full of life, in the truest sense of the word. The program is inspired by Siemens users and their various fields of endeavor, as well as the experiences obtained with their own systems. Absolutely, the upgrade of our system to modern technology was the prerequisite. This resulted in the principle of

„Everything works faster.“



THE SIEMENS LIFE PACKAGE

brought the computed tomography systems of the Viennese Brotherhood Hospital up to state-of-the-art. University professor Dr. Wolfgang Dock uses the most modern technology on a regular basis.

Brotherhood Hospital in Vienna implemented modern computed tomography (CT) as a diagnostic procedure in 2000. What was the reason?

We have a large endoscopy department. High-quality diagnoses are the prerequisite for successful endoscopic procedures.

What has been your experience over the past three years?

The SOMATOM Volume Zoom provided significant improvements in display capabilities. However, there were applications where the reconstruction time required for processing data was relatively long. For that reason, we used them only rarely. But that has now changed. The Siemens full maintenance contract included the *syngo Evolve** package containing an upgrade of the software and specific hardware components. Our system is now state-of-the-art.

How would you summarize the advantages of the package?

Everything works much faster. As a result, many methods that we used infrequently have now become part of the daily routine.

Can you name a few characteristic examples?

It used to take almost two hours to obtain a complete image of the vessels in the pelvis and legs. The new innovation package has reduced that time to 20 minutes. With MIP reconstruction, one can scroll through the images. It used to take several seconds per image. Now you can click through the images without any time delay. It is almost like watching a movie. This has significantly increased the quality of angiographic diagnosis.

Have you implemented 3D visualization?

Yes, because it enables us to see entire organs on-screen, instead of just single slices. This procedure also used to take a lot of time. We now only need a few seconds with this modern technique.

Does this mean that currently there is no need for you to invest in the next level of CT technology?

That would be financially impossible after three years. And the higher spatial resolution provided by the new systems is not something we need right now. Performance is key for us. It has to be there so that we can use all the device's capabilities. It makes no sense to not use functions provided by the CT system.

What are the advantages of the more powerful software and hardware for patients?

The entire examination is processed faster, although the time spent in the

device remains the same. But we no longer have to wait for images to load. Instead of ten minutes as it was previously, we now have images on screen practically in real time.

What have been the economic consequences of this acceleration in examinations for Brotherhood Hospital?

Personnel costs are the highest line item for medical services. Reducing evaluation time significantly lowers the cost of the individual examination.

Do insurance providers pay for these modern diagnostic procedures?

We are participating in a pilot study where insurance providers are testing the advantages of CT colonoscopy, which we are able to perform because of this upgrade. A CT colonoscopy provides more precise findings and is less stressful for the patient. It not only provides immediate information on the status of the intestines, but also simultaneous, secondary findings in the abdomen. These precise results mean that virtual colonoscopy can save us from having to perform invasive procedures, because we can sometimes determine the tissue comprising inversions in the intestines, for example in cases of lipoma.

Could you handle the large influx of patients if insurance providers agree to pay?

Indeed we can. The upgrade to the latest technology provides us with the necessary resources.

* In the event that upgrades require FDA approval, Siemens cannot predict whether or when the FDA will issue its approval. Therefore, if regulatory clearance is obtained and is applicable to this package, it will be made available according to the terms of this offer.

“Best Practice Sharing.” Today it has become an important instrument in sharing knowledge with others. Users have the ability to join an exclusive, internal user community to exchange experiences regarding clinical methods, image processing, and application tips. On the other hand, users can provide their knowledge and opinions to Siemens by participating in the user groups. There is good reason to believe, according to Darius Rubas, supervisor at the St. Alexius Medical Center in Bismarck, ND, that continuing education in technical and application areas are among the top products offered by Siemens.

Peak Performance Day In and Day Out

But Life is more than continuing education. Life stands for productivity, achieved through systems that provide the best performance every day. From regular maintenance and quality assurance to remote diagnostics and monitoring, Siemens never compromises when it comes to performance and technical security. The Caritas Hospital in Bad Mergentheim, Germany, is a good example. The cardiac cath lab is available around the clock so that emergency cases can be treated immediately. This makes the hospital unique. Siemens stands behind this hospital with a service program that has reduced system downtime to practically zero. “A technical breakdown before or during an operation would be catastrophic,” says Dr. Uwe Janssens, chief of internal medicine at Bad Mergentheim. Real-time monitoring is the secret behind success. Siemens monitors the cardiac cath lab around the clock. System problems often can be corrected remotely, without Dr. Janssens’ team even noticing. And reduced cardiac cath lab downtime means higher patient throughput according to Karl-Heinz Stump, head of medical technology at the Caritas Hospital.

Cutting Edge Technology

The technical area also has to keep up with the times. Upgrades and updates are important parts of this concept. This enables customers

to bring their systems up to the current technical level and improve system performance. Take for example Dr. Günther Sturz from the Radiology and Nuclear Medicine practice in Weiden, Germany. By installing an upgrade, he was able to reduce examination times by 15 percent*. Such system upgrades include improved clinical applications, more sophisticated device functions, and optimized work processes, which clearly result not only in medical, but also economic benefits.

Today, the requirements for physicians, hospitals, and medical technology are extremely varied. The integrated service solution from Siemens helps them master the challenges of the future – for the benefit of patients and staff. And that is the reason why Siemens gave its customer care program a name fraught with meaning: Life. Just like in real life.

*Results may vary. Data on File.



INVESTMENTS should have a positive effect on work processes. Increasing the productivity of our customers by high availability of our systems is one of our top goals,” says Dr. Wolfgang Heimsch, Head of Customer Services at Siemens Medical Solutions. “With Life, our customers secure the latest technology for themselves, and have us as a partner at their side, offering customized services.”

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