

How to put proactive service to work – today

SIEMENS

Perspective Article

After years of hype about proactive service, its time has finally come. Here's how to make it work.

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The proactive service capabilities available to diagnostic imaging professionals today are too powerful and advanced to ignore — especially as they are forced to do more with less to meet rising demands for equipment utilization, profitability and patient service.

And they're available for more modalities than ever before, often as part of a packaged service agreement, creating a new opportunity to put proactive service to work as a strategic advantage.

This paper outlines several practical steps for anyone looking to put proactive service to work for their organization in a way that minimizes risk of downtime and saves money. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, many hospitals and diagnostic imaging centers are facing similar challenges.

Here's how to get started.

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How to put proactive service to work – today

Introduction

Anybody who's been around in the world of medical services long enough has probably heard a lot of talk about proactive service through the years. The idea is simple enough — highly complex pieces of equipment such as diagnostic imaging systems come preloaded with software, connected through secure VPNs, that can identify emerging problems before they arise, notify service team members and help head off even bigger service headaches. They predict failure before it occurs and in many cases suggest a resolution to the problem to keep it from happening. A steady workflow is maintained, patients are served in a timely manner, utilization targets are met and important revenue streams are uninterrupted.

So why haven't healthcare facilities fully embraced proactive service? For starters, it can be hard to distinguish the hype from what's actually possible — after years of breathless announcements about the latest and greatest proactive service offerings, it becomes easy to dismiss the whole idea when all the promises don't match reality.

Plus, proactive service capabilities still vary widely depending on the modality. But the fact is that advanced proactive service capabilities are available for some of the most critical pieces of medical equipment to be found in any diagnostic imaging department, with CT, MR and angiography equipment being a prime example.

The proactive service capabilities available to diagnostic imaging professionals today are too powerful and advanced to ignore — especially as they are forced to do more with less to meet rising demands for equipment utilization, profitability and patient service. And they're available for more modalities than ever before, often as part of a packaged service agreement, creating a new opportunity to put proactive service to work as a strategic advantage. This paper outlines several practical steps for anyone looking to put proactive service to work for their organization in a way that minimizes risk of downtime and saves money. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, many hospitals and diagnostic imaging centers are facing similar challenges. Here's how to get started.

Rethink your service model

Among diagnostic imaging centers, many believe they are already pushing the limits of proactive service, when in reality they're only scratching the surface. These departments often suffer from overconfidence. In most cases, their proactive service approach doesn't go much further than remote diagnostics — a step in the right direction, but nowhere near the ability to detect and solve a problem before it even emerges as an issue. Remote diagnostics solutions are essentially reactive — the diagnostic imaging group still has to call the manufacturer after being notified of a problem, and then the troubleshooting begins.

In this approach, those responsible for the diagnostic imaging function have primarily focused their attention on having the right resources in place when they need them, at the right price. And many of them have gotten really good at it along the way.

But that can only take you so far. After all, there's only so much you can do once your equipment is already down. A real proactive service model can change the game entirely. But if your entire service model is built around this reactive approach, it can be hard to know where to start. And even if you put the right structure in place, that doesn't mean your people will follow suit.

Many organizations have found that a phased approach is the best way to get started, recognizing that their "legacy" approach just isn't going to change overnight. But as proactive service becomes standard, healthcare providers need to have mastered the art of proactive service from a management perspective. Best to get started now.

"Any time I can minimize downtime, it has a positive effect on patient care. And with the proactive tools available today, I can identify a subtle, easily overlooked problem and handle it before it becomes a big problem. That's a huge benefit to us."

-Bill Muer, South Jersey Radiology

Make the case

Any business decision worth making should be supported by a business case. And while proactive service may not be the type of far-reaching business decision that would initially seem to require a business case, it is likely to be met with skepticism by some simply because it's a different approach that doesn't fit into the standard break/fix model. For these reasons, a basic business case is worth the extra effort.

In any facility, maintaining a steady workflow is key to patient satisfaction, profitability and maximizing system utilization. If proactive service doesn't address the issues of workflow and uptime, its value is minimal. Consider the case of CTs. Diagnostic imaging centers charge roughly \$1,000 per CT scan. If a diagnostic imaging department schedules 30 patients each day that's \$30,000 in gross revenue per day. If the scanner isn't working, not only does the organization forgo that revenue, it creates major workflow headaches and patient dissatisfaction. Balance this against the extra up-front cost of a proactive service agreement, and the picture becomes a lot clearer. In many cases, the equipment can be fixed with no disruption to workflow — and no interruption in revenue generation or patient care.

While this is a significantly simplified example, the point is clear: There is a strong business case to be made for proactive service in most imaging centers. So why haven't you made one yet?

Learn from the experiences of others

If your diagnostic imaging group has already invested in imaging equipment preloaded with remote servicing capabilities, make sure you're getting the most value from your investment when it comes to proactive service. It may help to consider what your peers are doing with the same tools. A number of them have been using proactive service in recent years and have accumulated experiences and insights along the way that can guide your own efforts. Where have their investments paid off? How did proactive service match their expectations? Are there any pitfalls you should avoid? How well did their internal service teams adapt to a proactive service model? These are only a few of the questions that experienced users of proactive service can help answer.

"We are under massive pressure to deliver competent diagnoses to our colleagues in the hospital or to the referring physicians with ever faster turnaround times. Therefore, in the event of a malfunction, technical service must be just as prompt and competent."

-Prof. Claus D. Claussen, MD, Medical Director,
Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology,
University Hospital Tübingen, Germany

Start with a pilot program

Most of the modalities with proactive servicing capabilities come loaded with all the software and engineering you need, whether you decide to use them or not. In most cases, it's as simple as activating a service agreement with proactive features or options. Many facilities have started slowly, focusing on a single piece of equipment or modality as a pilot program. Then they begin to expand their use of proactive servicing capabilities based on their results.

That's the approach we recommend. It allows your department to acclimate to a new approach while delivering the experience and insights you need to make an informed decision on how far to take proactive service in your organization.

In many ways, this approach is anticlimactic — and that is exactly the point. In a reactive model, the test is how quickly and efficiently the service team can respond to an alarm. Proactive service takes the drama out of the service equation. Your service partner is quietly alerted to a potential failure and fixes the problem remotely or arranges a service appointment before the equipment is compromised, often during off-peak hours — in most cases avoiding significant disruption to your workflow through good planning.

Proactive service in action: The Guardian Program™ with TubeGuard

Proactive service capabilities are available today on many modalities. Angiography, MR and CT systems are all at the forefront of proactive service today.

One example of these capabilities in action today is Siemens own Guardian Program™ with TubeGuard. CT tube failures are one of the most common — not to mention disruptive and expensive — problems affecting CTs. While great strides have been made in extending the life of CT tubes, eventually they will fail due to problems ranging from drive failure to cooling problems. And when they do, they can affect other parts of the equipment as well.

The standard response to a tube failure is familiar: contact the service provider, schedule a service call as quickly as possible, diagnose the problem, order the necessary parts, schedule the repair, and so on. In the best cases, the equipment is down for one or two days. More complicated fixes can require more time — time that could have been spent scanning patients and maximizing utilization rates.

Siemens SOMATOM Definition CTs are preloaded with more than 10 sensors that are constantly monitoring the tube functions using real-time data. Using a secure VPN connection that has been recognized by ISO 27001 for its stability, the sensors communicate any detected problems back to the Siemens Guardian Program service team.

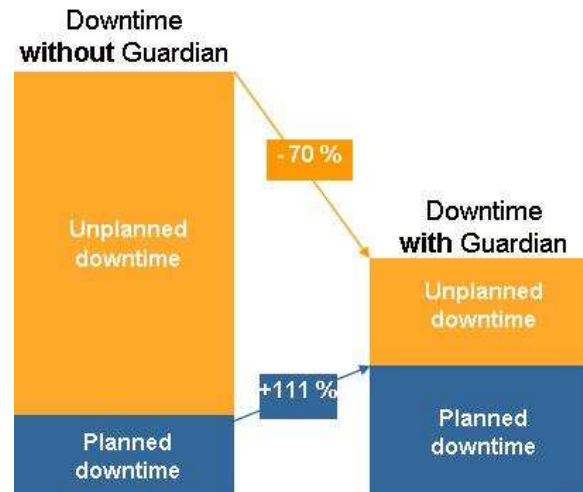
From there, the team often has all the information they need to predict tube failure and diagnose the problem before anything malfunctions. So when service engineers show up at the facility, they have all the parts and diagnostic insights they need to solve the problem in one service call. And with proper planning, they can schedule the service call at a time that requires no workflow disruption at all.

“It’s wonderful when the service engineer already knows what the problem is, without our having to order a part overnight and keep the lab closed for the rest of the day.”

-Lawrence May, RN, Clinical Manager for Invasive Cardiology, Sarasota Memorial Hospital, Sarasota Florida

Proactive service can’t prevent downtime 100% of the time — not yet, at least. But for Siemens Guardian Program with TubeGuard the tube failure prediction accuracy currently exceeds 70%, and it can predict a failure up to 10 days before it strikes. On average, TubeGuard can reduce downtime from approximately 48 hours to approximately eight hours — more

importantly, the repair time can be scheduled during a time slot that doesn’t interrupt workflow.



While proactive service cannot completely eliminate service-related downtime, it can dramatically reduce it. As this chart shows, organizations using Siemens Guardian Program are able to significantly decrease downtime and plan around scheduled downtime.

As a result, diagnostic imaging organizations experience some significant benefits, including:

- Predictable downtime, with less risk of unplanned workflow disruptions
- Proactive rescheduling of patients and staff
- Tube replacement performed as scheduled — at a convenient time for you
- Less risk of damaging your reputation or reducing patient satisfaction
- Potentially less revenue loss through the ability to plan downtimes in advance

Now is the time

Proactive service is one of the most significant developments to occur not just in the healthcare service industry, but in the world of service. The fact is, there aren’t many industries today that have the advanced technologies and engineering capabilities in place to make proactive service a reality. That’s why many industries look to healthcare as a standard-bearer in this area.

But many facilities aren't taking advantage of these advanced capabilities. Some have service models that simply aren't currently designed to support proactive service. Others dismiss proactive service as the hype du jour, and are waiting to see proof before making the decision. But there is already ample proof of the benefits of proactive service, and it's continuing to evolve so that all your critical imaging equipment can benefit. If you're not taking advantage of proactive service, your organization is at risk of being left behind.

Today, Siemens offers several services that are setting the standard for proactive service in the industry. We are monitoring a whole range of equipment for hospitals and imaging centers around the world, diagnosing and solving problems in real time. From MR and Angiography equipment to CTs, we are changing the service dynamic to help our customers meet aggressive new utilization requirements, maintain profitability and maintain a steady, uninterrupted workflow — the key to success in today's economy.

It's a whole new way of looking at service – and it's finally within reach. If you're ready to get proactive, we're ready to help.

For more information about Siemens proactive service offerings, please contact your Siemens Area Service Manager or Service Sales Executive.

1-888-826-9702

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