

strategy and that it fits into your organization's culture and service expectations. If you want to make your application more stable, if you want to make sure that you minimize downtime, if you want to allocate your resources to do other things, this is the right thing for you."

On Choosing Siemens

Reed began her search for an ASP vendor with a questionnaire that focused on the following factors:

- Security, including firewalls and intrusion detection
- Business continuity
- Location of the hardware. "Does the ASP or hosting vendor have the hardware, or do they 'third party' it from somewhere else?"
- Backups
- HIPAA components
- Experience with upgrades, patches and fixes.

When first examining potential providers, Reed advises first to make sure that the vendor is not overpromising. "If they are, then you can't be sure you can trust the information that you are getting," she stated. "You must also consider the reputation and experience level of the vendor."

Reed said that the decision to go with Siemens was easy, once all the variables were considered. "I feel much more confident working with a company that has been in business for more than 30 years versus one in business for just two years," she explained. "The relationship with the vendor is also important, feeling comfortable and trusting that vendor. And of course, a strong infrastructure is essential: where is it, what is it, how secure is it, and how skilled is the vendor with the infrastructure." Virtua was also confident in Siemens' upgrades, which Reed called 'a finely tuned process.' "Often, newer ASPs partition databases incorrectly, so when they attempt an upgrade, they may cause an unnecessary and unexpected interruption in the entire system.

"Our main concern at Virtua Health is the functionality of the application and whether or not people can use it to get their jobs done and take great care of our patients. That's why we chose Siemens in the end," concluded Reed.

Contact your Siemens representative to find out how our consultants, methodologies and services can help your organization improve outcomes today.



From Point A to Point B — Virtua Health and Hosted Solutions from Siemens

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“We also started looking at Virtua Health’s goals, and we decided, from a strategic planning perspective, that Virtua Health is going to be a comprehensive medical center in seven to 10 years. Based upon this organizational goal, we asked ourselves, ‘What is the IS department’s true value to the organization?’” said Reed. “As a result, IS’s strategic plan centered on how to provide value to the organization. As a first priority, we put together a comprehensive program to get us from point A to point B.”

*Linda A. Reed,
Virtua Vice President and
Chief Information Officer*

Virtua Health was created in 1998 by the merger of the West Jersey Health System and the Memorial Health Alliance. With more than 7,000 employees and 1,600 physicians providing services, Virtua Health is the largest healthcare provider in southern New Jersey. Their capabilities are impressive: Four acute care hospitals. Comprehensive primary care and emergency services through their outpatient centers. Two long-term comprehensive care facilities. Two outpatient surgery centers. A home health care agency. More than 7,000 babies delivered annually. A comprehensive neonatal intensive care unit, plus pediatric, primary and specialty care services are offered as part of the Virtua duPont Children’s Health Program, an affiliation with the Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children. And Virtua’s five emergency centers handle more emergencies — including pediatric emergencies — than any other hospital in South Jersey.

Similarly, the Virtua Health Information Services department is committed to the healthcare mission by supporting caregivers in providing an outstanding patient experience. The vision of the Virtua Health Information Services Department (IS) includes the following:

- Increase the value of information technology to Virtua Health by

providing physicians and employees the technology, tools and training required to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently.

- Strive to implement solutions that make healthcare easier and safer for patients, physicians and employees.
- Implement value-based clinical systems that work together to improve clinical care and outcomes.
- Match new technologies to the needs of the organization, and maximize resources through appropriate outsourcing to allow the best provider to do the job.

According to Virtua Vice President and Chief Information Officer Linda A. Reed, Virtua Health needed a strategy for its HIT (Health Information Technology) environment in order to fulfill its IS vision after the merger. The main problem: One of the data centers supported Siemens products, while the other did not. “There was a virtual line right down the middle of the billing department,” said Reed. “One side was built on Siemens products, while the other side was built on (the competitor’s product). We had a bad case of the ‘two times’ factor — two times the license fees, two times the training fees, two times the support fees.”

Meeting Strategic Goals

As both an R.N. and an M.B.A, Reed examined the effects of this redundancy on Virtua Health’s clinical and business functions. “We also started looking at Virtua Health’s goals, and we decided, from a strategic planning perspective, that Virtua Health is going to be a comprehensive medical center in seven to 10 years. Based upon this organizational goal, we asked ourselves, ‘What is the IS department’s true value to the organization?’” said Reed. “As a result, IS’s strategic plan centered on how to provide value to the organization. As a first priority, we put together a comprehensive program to get us from point A to point B.”

Selective outsourcing – choosing to purchase certain services rather than provide them in-house – was one of the first strategies considered. Reed identified outsourcing as a way to optimize her department’s resources. “When deciding to outsource, you either want to decrease cost, increase revenue or gain a competitive advantage,” explained Reed. “If we eliminate the time spent maintaining equipment, we can then spend more time assisting our end users effectively. This allows our end users to increase their productivity. By making our administrative and clinical processes more efficient and effective, we can improve patient care.”

Based on the desire to improve patient care through better efficiency, Virtua Health decided to outsource some of their

applications to an application service provider (ASP). One vendor chosen was Siemens, based on the company’s leadership, its ability to handle a wide range of applications, and the stability demonstrated for more than 30 years in healthcare and IT.

Return on Investment

“When we started looking, we asked ‘Would we go with an unproven vendor?’” said Reed. “Absolutely not. That’s why we chose Siemens for a number of our hosted solutions.”

When Reed and her team calculated the return on investment from outsourcing applications, they started to uncover specific areas where they would save money. For example, they would avoid significant start-up costs such as equipment purchases and networking associated with the introduction of new applications. They would also increase their processing capacity and disaster recovery capabilities by taking advantage of the Siemens infrastructure.

“We realized we could actually allocate our existing resources elsewhere, providing us new service opportunities,” explained Reed. “For example, I have already reassigned two system programmers, and we’re looking to redirect two more programmers for maximum efficiency.”

Reed offered this advice to her colleagues who are considering purchasing a hosted solution. “Make sure it is part of your

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