



CASE STUDY

SaaS...A Good Alternative to the EHR.

With no electronic healthcare system on the horizon, Christi Rister, HIM Director, feared they would have to find an off-site storage facility. The idea of staff wasting time pulling records 15 times a day from storage was frustrating and the technology did not fit the modern hospital's image.

Ken Karriker of EDCO Group Inc, proposed several ways to handle the records. Rister picked SaaS which she felt was state-of-the-art and allowed her FTE's to be the most productive. The IT department also pushed for the SaaS because it reduced their workload.

Setting Vendor Criteria

The SaaS decision was not without apprehension, however. Here is a list of key criteria that Lubbock Heart put forth:

- Security and HIPAA compliance and control
- Readability of scanned images – even on EKG and pulmonary function tests
- Ability to catalog like they are set up not fitting a vendor format
- Easy access – view all of a patient's activities then select what is wanted
- Intuitive software requiring no learning curve
- Control of who is allowed access
- 24-hour access with chart retrieval while records are being scanned
- Paper storage as a safety net
- Speed in converting – ability to scan quickly and upload to SaaS

"We looked at other vendors too but EDCO met all of the points we listed," says Rister. "IT even put their software and network security to the test and couldn't find one fault."

Tackling Security

In addition to basic software security, many questions arise when deciding to electronically

Finding Better Solutions

Lubbock Heart Hospital in Lubbock, TX, was a new hospital with a big problem. Success had filled the file room in just two years.

Using a thorough selection process, Christi Rister, HIM Director, chose EDCO's SaaS (Software as a Service) as the best solution.

"We didn't have one glitch," says Rister. "It's like getting an EHR and somebody else does all the work."

store medical records offsite. As with anyone looking at a SaaS solution, Lubbock Heart's IT and administration wanted assurances that records would be protected from data loss and that on-site and data transfer security measures were in place. They were confident once they learned more about building and maintaining their SaaS.

First, data protection requires both storage back up and transfer security. After Lubbock Heart's paper records are scanned and quality checked at the EDCO Conversion Center location, the electronic files are uploaded to the SaaS via a fiber broadband intranet. Each night the SaaS is backed up to a separate location for storage redundancy. If the primary site would fail, the records would be quickly restored and the user would not likely notice a difference. Offline archiving is also available.

As an added layer of security and control, the hospital sends an authorization for each user before initial access is granted. To eliminate the possibility of unauthorized access to the medical

records, dual firewalls stand guard. Data is transferred using SSL technology for automatic encryption as it passes over the internet.

Second, the SaaS resides in an underground facility designed specifically for data security. This guarded community is carved out of solid limestone 85 feet down which naturally protects against tornados, floods, lightning, fire, and vandalism. Temperature and humidity are precisely controlled.

Third, only authorized personnel are allowed in these highly restrictive areas. In addition to driving past the underground entrance guard station, people can only access the SaaS system through a series of security checks. This includes facility door keycards with a mantrap lobby requiring physical identification by a guard and biometric scanning before exiting to a common area. To gain access to Lubbock Heart's SaaS located in a "building within a building" entails passing three additional levels of security and surveillance.

Fourth, the value of a SaaS is timely retrieval. To ensure continuity of access even in a time of natural or manmade disaster, the system is designed for sustainability. Utility grade power comes from a dedicated underground substation feed. And, the underground is fully equipped with self-contained battery bank and generator back-up systems to prevent any loss of connectivity. There is also redundancy in the internet backbone.

Another part of adopting a new technology is letting go of old ways, namely paper. Currently, Rister keeps paper records in the EDCO underground SecureStore facility even after they are scanned and uploaded to the SaaS in case they find an unreadable image or have a legal request. She plans to drop this policy at some point.

Managing the SaaS

Records are picked up every four to five months to be scanned and uploaded to the SaaS. This leaves a minimal amount of paper on the shelves. Because the file room is not manned 24/7, another benefit for the HIM department is avoiding the hassle of tracking down paper charts that are taken with out-guides in the off hours.

"At first, our physicians were concerned about charts going across country," recalls Rister, "but we found that quick retrieval for records during conversion is faster than pulling from the file room. Access is incredibly easy with the SaaS software. We can instantaneously view, select and print pages in a chart."

Today, there are about 20 users who are allowed access, primarily unit secretaries and charge nurses. The goal is to eventually provide remote access for doctors.

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