

Medical Office Increases Productivity with Unified Communications System

Unified communications helps small practice run more efficiently by spending less time on phone calls and messages.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>Dr. Jayakar and Associates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare • Mountain View, CA • 3 Doctors, 5 Staff
<p>BUSINESS CHALLENGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide high-quality, personalized care for patients • Increase staff productivity • Reduce time spent on administrative tasks
<p>BUSINESS RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced time required for appointment reminder calls from four hours to 15 minutes per day • Reduced time spent initiating phone calls and responding to messages • Achieved more efficient contact with insurance companies, more personal communication with patients, and improved staff collaboration
<p>NETWORK SOLUTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New phone system increases call efficiency with integrated directory and one-touch dialing • New message management system helps users respond more quickly to high-priority calls • Outsourced network management lets doctors and staff focus on core competencies

Business Challenges

Small medical practices commonly struggle to complete labor-intensive administrative tasks while providing outstanding care in a warm and personal atmosphere. “I was really getting tired, working such long hours and then coming home and uploading my transcriptions to the HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] Website in the evenings. It was just a lot of work,” says sports medicine specialist Dr. Sunita Jayakar.

Dr. Jayakar realized that doctors and staff members in her office were spending the majority of their time on telephone calls and messages. With three doctors each seeing 25 patients per day, the appointment reminder calls alone demanded up to four hours of daily staff time. These routine calls added a significant amount of overhead to vital communication requirements such as returning calls from patients and

contacting insurance companies for authorizations to perform specialized procedures.

Even the time spent on critical phone communication was riddled with inefficiencies. Calls to other practices required staff members to look up contact information manually and provide handwritten numbers to the doctor. Unanswered incoming calls went to a general voice mailbox that did not provide a way for staff members to easily separate urgent messages from routine calls.

Dr. Jayakar wanted to improve communications productivity, but was concerned about maintaining a personalized office atmosphere. “In the medical field, you need personal contact. Nobody wants things to be too automated or high tech – patients prefer to speak to a live person,” says Dr. Jayakar.

When a Cisco® Partner explained the features of the Cisco Smart Business Communications System, Dr. Jayakar realized that her office could spend significantly less time on telephone communication and retain the personal atmosphere that she had worked so hard to create.

“The staff used to spend four hours a day making appointment reminder calls. Now they spend 15 minutes a day uploading the information, and the system places the calls.”

– Dr. Sunita Jayakar, Sports Medicine Specialist and Practice Owner

Business Results

The Cisco Smart Business Communications System is a secure call management and messaging solution that increases front office productivity, allowing doctors and staff to devote more time to patients and critical tasks.

One of the most powerful productivity features for Dr. Jayakar’s office is the automated appointment reminder system. “The staff used to spend four hours a day making appointment reminder calls. Now they spend 15 minutes a day uploading the information, and the system places the calls,” says Dr. Jayakar.

On-screen voicemail and separate mailboxes for patients, doctors, pharmacies, and insurance companies also increase productivity by reducing the time required for message management. Now insurance companies calling to authorize procedures can simply select the appropriate mailbox and leave a message. Doctors and staff can visually scan the messages for a specific authorization and add it to the patient’s file. The same tool allows critical calls to be immediately forwarded to the doctor.

“We used to check messages twice a day. It was a long process just to see if one procedure had been approved,” says Dr. Jayakar. “The new phone system lets us retrieve messages very selectively and much more efficiently, because we can quickly access the message that we need when we need it.”

Doctors and staff also save time on outgoing calls with the help of an integrated directory and touchscreen calling. “Before I had to ask for the extension for this or that department. Now it’s all in the phone. I just touch the screen and the call goes out,” says Dr. Jayakar.

In addition to storing directory information for outgoing calls, the system also logs all inbound and outbound calls. This feature is particularly useful when a new patient scheduled by an employer or referring physician fails to keep the appointment. In that case, the system can report all the phone numbers associated with that patient so a staff member can call the number that initiated the referral. “This capability not only helps us with the billing, but it shows a lot of responsibility from the doctor’s standpoint,” says Dr. Jayakar.

Even with the new automated functions, the office still retains a personal environment. “Caller ID lets us answer the phone with the patient’s name, and patients can still press a button to talk with a receptionist,” says Dr. Jayakar.



Network Solution

Without extensive IT expertise in house, Dr. Jayakar elected to work with Cisco Partner Network Architects, Inc., located in nearby San Mateo, California, to install and maintain a Cisco Smart Business Communications System. This integrated solution includes call processing, voice messaging with an Automated Attendant, LAN switching, security, and remote management capabilities.

“The knowledge that Network Architects is continuously monitoring my system and is ready to take action before any issues affect my business gives me the peace of mind to sleep better at night.”

– Dr. Sunita Jayakar

The system’s remote management capabilities and the expertise of Network Architects were important factors in Dr. Jayakar’s decision to transition to the Cisco Smart Business Communications System. “Song Chin from Network Architects showed me how the Cisco Monitor Director remote management system would let him monitor my phone line usage so I could upgrade before my patients started getting busy signals,” says Dr. Jayakar. “The knowledge that Network Architects is continuously monitoring my system and is ready to take action before any issues affect my business gives me the peace of mind to sleep better at night.”

Network Architects worked with the office personnel to understand their core business processes and voice communication requirements. They used this information to create an online directory

PRODUCT LIST

- Cisco Unified Communications 500 Series for Small Business
 - Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express
 - Cisco Unity® Express
 - Support for Cisco Unified CallConnectors for integration with Windows PC applications
 - Firewall and VPN capabilities
- Cisco Catalyst® Express 520 Series Switches
- Cisco Unified IP Phones
- Business productivity applications from Cisco and third parties
- Cisco Configuration Assistant
- Cisco Monitor Director

that lets users search by first name, last name, or company name for one-touch dialing. They also created an interface between the Cisco Smart Business Communications System, the Versaform Practice Management system, and IPsmartSuite from IPcelerate to support the automated appointment notification system. Once the system was installed, Network Architects trained the entire staff on its use. The training included teaching staff members how to upload appointment information to the automated reminder system.

“Network Architects took the time to understand our challenges and our business processes so we would get the productivity benefits that we were looking for,” says Dr. Jayakar.

Most of the configuration was done prior to the installation to minimize business disruption. The deployment took place over a period of two weeks, and the transition to the new phone system was accomplished in just three hours.

Next Steps

In the future, Dr. Jayakar may take advantage of the system's wireless and Internet access capabilities. For now, she is delighted with the increased productivity that the office is already experiencing. Even the practice's patients are happy with the new phone system. "The patients are fascinated because the phones look very high-tech and sophisticated. They know that we're on top of the latest technology," says Dr. Jayakar.

For More Information

For more information about the Cisco Smart Business Communications System, please visit www.cisco.com/go/sbcs.



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