

CASE STUDY

Customer: Community Hospital of Munster, Indiana

Solution: Ascom IP-DECT System, d62 handsets, Unite Messaging Suite with NetPage and Medamax



COMMUNITY HOSPITAL OF MUNSTER CASE STUDY

BYPASS TIME REDUCED BY 67% AND 50 MORE PATIENTS TREATED DAILY BY UTILIZATION OF THE ASCOM SYSTEM

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Community Hospital in Munster, Indiana is a highly recognized facility for quality care. It has been duly acknowledged for meeting the highest healthcare standards in the nation by The Joint Commission (TJC) as well as recognized as one of America’s 50 Best Hospitals by HealthGrades® four years in a row, 2008-2011.

As part of the Community Healthcare System, the 427-bed facility has a medical staff of more than 575 physicians and operates among its 24-hour services an Emergency Department (ED), Intensive Care, Intermediate Care, Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Neonatal units, Community Oncology Center, Women’s Diagnostic Center, Rehabilitation Center, Orthopedics Unit and Outpatient Surgery. The Hospital also supports the area’s largest cancer treatment and research programs, linked to the National Cancer Institute and major research cooperatives around the globe. Cardiovascular research, neurosurgery and a 5,000-member medically-based fitness center are other examples of the Hospital’s broad range of specialties.

Community Hospital’s Emergency Department treats approximately 65,000 patients each year. In early 2009, the ED was regularly facing overcrowding and spending many hours on Bypass status. A hospital on Bypass status requests that ambulances divert patients to another hospital due to capacity issues in its Emergency Department. In addition to the significant financial impact on the Hospital, the frequent Bypass status was also having a negative impact on patient satisfaction, quality of care and its availability to the community. By improving its workflow processes and implementing advanced technology, the hospital has now in 2011 been able to reduce its Bypass hours to a minimum while extensively increasing patient throughput in the ED.

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Community Hospital took a big step toward its efficiency gains by deploying an Ascom IP-DECT system throughout its Munster facilities in mid-2009. By improving staff communication, the Ascom IP-DECT system has been able to address the Hospital’s critical Bypass status issue. When on Bypass, the ED staff notifies a dynamic group consisting of the nursing supervisor, CNO, ED physician on call, Bed Board and housekeeping supervisor via a single text message initiated from the Ascom NetPage application which is accessible from any computer in the Hospital. Depending on the Bypass status severity level, each assigned member will then activate a series of tasks within their own individual groups, expedite bed and resource availability and, if necessary, “size-up” the ED staff by shifting people from other departments.

Once all triggers for Bypass status in the ED are back within tolerance, a text message is sent out to notify staff members to return to standard procedures.

In this case study, Community Hospital expresses its success with the Ascom system and how it has helped improve not only staff efficiency but also the healing environment, mobility and satisfaction scores.

Community Hospital previously had a wide-area text paging system, a few walkie-talkies and a public announcement (PA) system to support its internal communication needs. These systems were far from perfect and did not stand up to the demands of a modern hospital. Not only were the old systems too loud and disruptive but they could also be unreliable with dead spots and missed announcements as common challenges.

In 2008, the management team at Community Healthcare System decided to modernize its communication systems with the clear goal to enhance patient flow and reduce Emergency Department Bypass occurrences through improvements in internal communication processes. They had the strategic intent to select a system that was user-focused and helped staff do their jobs more efficiently. They evaluated a number of wireless communication systems from manufacturers such as Vocera, Polycom and Ascom as well as cellular phones. It soon became clear that the Ascom system was the most appropriate system because it provided more of the healthcare-specific features the Hospital required. The Ascom system’s combination of reliability, durability, voice features and interactive messaging far exceeded all other vendors’ systems and allowed for advanced integration to patient care systems as well as customization to Community Hospital’s specific workflow.

Successful rollouts of communication systems are no easy task but the Ascom migration took place with no major interruptions. Since the Ascom IP-DECT system operates in a frequency dedicated by the federal government for wireless voice, the Hospital’s legacy systems could continue running in parallel as users transitioned to the new Ascom d62 handsets.

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The Ascom handset offers the professional worker a powerful communication tool packed with feature-rich applications that improve efficiency in demanding environments.

Community Hospital wanted to ensure that the new communication system would be welcomed by all users so the Hospital implemented a well-managed rollout plan that first focused on management, nursing, EKG, lab and transporters. The project enlisted these early adopters to learn and define the most appropriate usage of the wireless phones as integrations to patient safety and information management systems were added to improve workflow processes. With a solid base of super users and a well-tested implementation plan in place, the Hospital began a methodical roll out campaign to other departments that wanted to migrate from the old systems to the modern Ascom solution. This has proven to be a successful approach resulting in a multitude of requests from staff demanding that they need an Ascom d62 to do their work more efficiently. Today most of the care staff has their own Ascom d62 and insist that it is critical to their work. As John Olmstead, Surgical & ED Services Director explains, “The Ascom d62 has become a part of how we make the work get done here. We have realized that we cannot do without this communication device and we have also seen a great improvement in personal accountability throughout the workforce and in addition to the overall higher throughput and improved bed usage ratio.”

Ronda J. McKay, VP PCS/CNO, MSN, CNS, RN adds, “It’s the way and the concept of notifying and connecting people. There are no more paper excuses as we have been able to phase out much of the notifications via memos and paper. Notifications in the new Ascom system are instant and so are the responses which means there is no hiding or paper excuses. As the new system provides electronic reports, we are also able to statistically and quickly prove any workflow changes as we move forward. The nurses have also gained a better one-to-one relationship, meaning that any coordination is both faster and smoother. The Ascom devices are within the comfort zone of the nurses and physicians as they are simple to use and provide prompt alerts in plain text instead of the cryptic numeric messages that we got with the old pagers”.

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By employing the Ascom system, the staff at Community Hospital has dramatically reduced the time to notify and gather assigned physicians, nurses and other staff to an event. This improvement shortens the overall wait time for patients in the Emergency Department and allows for faster ED throughput. It also improves patient satisfaction with fewer patients in the hallways due to the higher utilization of beds and other resources.

The reliability, penetrative notifications and voice-enabled coordination provided by the Ascom system have enabled the staff to be more engaged, respond quicker and be more proactive with their colleagues and patients. All of the staff’s communication needs are met in a single Ascom d62 handset instead of having pagers that require access to fixed phones and fax machines that cannot provide the recipient acknowledgement necessary for proper healthcare communication.

Furthermore, the Hospital has been able to reduce the need for information broadcasts on the overhead public announcement system which has created a quiet, calm and private atmosphere in the hospital. Since both staff and patient satisfaction have increased, it is clear that the benefits of direct notifications to functional groups and individual staff members have confirmed the immense value of the Ascom system.

As previously mentioned, Community Hospital has taken advantage of the many connectivity possibilities available through Ascom’s Unite messaging suite by integrating its Massimo Patient SafetyNet system to send patient vital signs from the telemetry system directly to the Ascom d62 devices of the nurse and physician in charge. Additionally, the Rauland-Borg nurse call system and newly implemented Epic hospital information system connect through the Unite middleware to the Ascom phones to provide better interactivity between staff and patients as well as faster notification of important patient information.

The Ascom system allows the Bed Board to communicate directly and immediately while coordinating patient transfers between units. With a more agile handover between the emergency department and the receiving unit, Community Hospital has reduced its patient transfer time by an average of one hour.

Further enhancements to the patient flow process are attributed to improved communication for highly mobile Case Management staff. Nursing Supervisors are now able to call Case Managers directly on their Ascom d62s rather than exchange information through admitting staff. Also, Bed managers are able to coordinate directly with the Environmental Services Manager to know which rooms need to be cleaned and which ones are available for occupancy.

OPERATIONAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT	
RESULT	BENEFIT
Reduced Time on Bypass	Significant financial impact. Higher availability and continuous care to the community.
Increased Patient Satisfaction	Shorter wait times to see medical care staff. Faster throughput in Emergency Department. Less patients in hallways waiting to be admitted to an inpatient bed.
Improved Clinical Staff Engagement	Increased patient safety and quality of care. More reliable service provided to patients. Less walking/running.
Better Healing Environment	Reduction of overhead paging resulting in decreased noise level. Improved bed availability.

“The Ascom system has now been in operation at Community Hospital for over 2 years and has produced astounding improvements in our workflow processes during Emergency Department Bypass situations. The statistical data we have collected shows a reduction in bypass time of more than 65%, resulting in revenue increases of an additional \$1.2M annually,” exults Ronda J. McKay.

Overall, Community Hospital’s benefits from the Ascom IP-DECT system have exceeded expectations and the return on investment is greater than what the Communication Board at the Community Healthcare System anticipated. It has improved the workflow processes and cemented Community Hospital as an award-winning, high quality care facility.

About Ascom

Ascom is the Americas’ market leading developer of workplace wireless communication solutions providing system users with greater freedom of movement, better service and increased safety. Our research and development focuses on products and solutions for our core business of on-site wireless communication. We are committed to providing the Americas with products that are unique, durable and innovative.

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