



Leading Medical Center Automates Service Desk Operations and Increases Tracking for HIPAA Compliance

The Medical Center of Central Georgia (MCCG), an entity of Central Georgia Health System is a designated Level I Trauma Center and Magnet™ hospital for nursing serving the residents of Central and South Georgia. It has a primary and secondary service area of 28 counties with a population of nearly 750,000 people.

The Medical Center has approximately 5,000 employees and a medical staff of more than 500 physicians. MCCG is the second largest hospital in Georgia with a capacity of 637 beds including medical-surgical, obstetric, pediatric, psychiatric, cardiac intensive care, neurology intensive care, pediatric intensive care, and cardiac surgery intensive care.

MCCG provides a broad range of community-based, outpatient diagnostic, primary care, urgent-care, extensive home-health and hospice-care services, as well as comprehensive rehab services. MCCG strives to make excellence a daily standard.

The Challenge

Replace a limited homegrown system with one that automatically tracks and manages requests and includes a full set of request/incident/problem management tools

MCCG's commitment to excellence and the highest quality patient care is increasingly dependent on technology across all aspects of its operations. To ensure its reputation as one of the more distinguished healthcare facilities in the country, MCCG's IT department proactively manages all technology-related incidents and requests for services. IT understands that all hospital personnel must have access to reliable systems and applications without disruptions in order to deliver the best possible care.

As part of the organization's challenge to keep employees connected, MCCG's IT department decided to replace their existing system with one that provided more flexibility. It needed a system to centrally track and manage service and support requests across all departments, and extend and expand the channels of logging incidents by integrating email.

IN BRIEF

Industry
Healthcare

Challenge

Implement a flexible and easily customizable service desk solution that is easy to deploy for tracking requests, managing changes and enhancing HIPAA compliance

Solutions

- Numara FootPrints

Business Application

- Centralized IT Service Desk
- Multiple Business Process Automation
- HIPAA Compliance
- Change Management

Key Features

- Ease-of-use and administration
- 100% web-based
- Email management
- Low cost of ownership
- Time-tracking
- Flexibility
- Expandability

Benefits

- Able to track 800% more issues than with previous homegrown system
- A comprehensive program that ensures 100% of issues are tracked
- Improved workflow and communication
- More efficient in closing issues
- Ability to track and manage changes and approvals, allowing requests to be completed faster
- Ability to customize and run reports to provide hard data for management and HIPAA

“Previously we had a homegrown system for technical tracking that was developed by one of our employees,” explained Isaac Ramsingh, systems analyst for the IT department. “While the system was useful early on, there was no dynamic functionality, such as web

integration and email management. As our service volumes grew, issues and requests were falling through the cracks. We needed a new service desk tool that would allow us to be more efficient, process more requests, and deliver better support to our employees and customers, in turn helping to provide better healthcare to our patients.”

“For us, selecting Numara FootPrints as our new service desk tool was an easy choice.”

Issac Ramsingh
 Systems Analyst
 Medical Center of Central Georgia

The Corporate Compliance department, in conjunction with the IT department also manages requests for access to most systems throughout the organization. “Security management was previously discussed in meetings and via email, but there was no way of tracking approvals and generating reports,” stated Ramsingh. MCCG needed a system for its Corporate Compliance and Security departments that could be used to manage and control access requests to critical systems. They needed an automated process whereby requests for access or change of access were tracked from the point of the request through to the point of access. This would help to streamline processes relating to the transitioning of new hires, managing access to critical systems, and providing reporting for HIPAA compliance.

On the IT side, “We also needed a tool in place that could automate our change management processes in real time,” said Ramsingh. “Having a system that could integrate with the service desk was something we knew could help streamline our operations and ensure change or work requests were processed in a timely manner.”

The Solution

Implement 100% web based Numara FootPrints for automating workflows

MCCG began its search for a new service desk solution in January, 2005 and narrowed their choice to five options: Numara® FootPrints®, FrontRange’s HEAT®, BMC’s® Remedy®, Touchpaper, and Hewlett-Packard. After a thorough review of each product, MCCG selected Numara FootPrints based on its flexibility, web-based technology, and affordability.

“In addition to an increase in ticket volume, we have been able to deploy Numara FootPrints in many different areas of the organization that we never thought possible. We originally purchased Numara FootPrints as a technical help desk/information systems project, but when people started realizing the flexibility and potential of the product, we deployed it to different areas of our organization for different purposes.”

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“Simply put, Numara FootPrints had all of the features and functionality that we required at a price that was much less than any of its competitors,” stated Jim Epstein, systems analyst at MCCG. “After receiving a demo, it was apparent to us that the solution was far superior in terms of on-going support, ease-of-installation, and ease-of-use. For us, selecting Numara FootPrints as our new service desk tool was an easy choice.” According to Ramsingh and Epstein, the top features that made Numara FootPrints the first choice for MCCG were its email management and notification capabilities, web-based functionality offering unlimited customization, low cost, expandability, and flexibility. The system’s multi-project capability allowing multiple independent systems to be created at no extra cost, was also a major factor in the decision to purchase Numara FootPrints.

Key Features

Ability to easily automate the service desk as well as many additional hospital functions

Centralized IT Service Desk

Just weeks after selecting the solution in April, 2005, MCCG deployed Numara FootPrints and in no time, 109 agents were up-and-running. Today, the IT department’s main help desk/information systems project in Numara FootPrints manages more than 5,000 incidents each month.

Ease-of-use made the solution ideal for automating the service desk. “As a web-based solution, Numara FootPrints requires only a browser to access the system, eliminating the need for time-consuming installs and updates,” explained Ramsingh. “Through its integrated email capabilities, Numara FootPrints has become a tremendous communication tool as we no longer have to go into Microsoft® Outlook® to process and route incidents to agents. We simply check a box and an email is automatically generated each time a ticket is open, closed, and/or updated. In addition, countless notification emails are automatically generated when certain criteria are met.”

Multiple business process management

The IT department has since expanded its use of Numara FootPrints beyond the service desk, creating 18 projects and counting to track and manage different types of requests. Some of these additional projects (and the business processes that are automated in each project) include:

- Vendor Tracker
- Compliant Tracker
- Employee Referral
- Environmental Services Requests
- Ethics Tracker
- Family Health Center Referral Tracker
- Forms Manager
- Hospital Police Incident Tracker
- Human Resources FAQ/Suggestion Box
- Palliative Care Case Tracker
- Pharmacy Issue Tracker
- Radiology Request Tracker
- Security Access
- Systems Performance

Tracking and reporting for HIPAA compliance

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) was enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1996 and created national standards for maintaining electronic health care data. MCCG and Ramsingh use Numara FootPrints to ensure that MCCG stores and handles sensitive data in compliance with HIPAA. "We have 75 different information systems in the hospital which we currently track," said Ramsingh. "We needed a way to automate the management of granting, altering, and revoking customer and employee access to these systems in a HIPAA compliant manner."

Prior to Numara FootPrints, MCCG used paper forms which were filled out and faxed to Corporate Compliance. The information was filled out in a homegrown system, then the system administrator would retrieve the information. He would then grant credentials by sending them through interoffice mail to the employee. "The possible security breaches as well as process inefficiencies were pretty obvious," said Ramsingh.

Now with Numara FootPrints the entire process is handled electronically. An authorized requestor – a manager or designated staff member – enters requests for additions or changes to access for certain systems for certain employees. Access to this project has been restricted to only these authorized requestors. "A request in this system could be for a new employee needing access to five systems, for example," said Ramsingh. "But it is also used for cases such as employee transfers, resignations or terminations, and for tracking access for non-employees as well such as consultants, vendors, med students, and contractors."

Numara FootPrints notifies Corporate Compliance that a security change request has been submitted and they can then approve it if appropriate. "Then Numara FootPrints automatically creates a sub ticket for each system requested," said Ramsingh, "and each sub ticket is automatically assigned to the appropriate system administrator. The administrators are notified by email and log in to Numara FootPrints to review the request and provide access. From there the data flows to a secure authenticated web page where the employee or associate can retrieve credentials and systems instructions."

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"The automated system is much more efficient and accurate," said Ramsingh. "Because it is electronic, it is much more secure." In addition, MCCG now has the data to run reports on system access. For example, Corporate Compliance can track the length of time needed to grant or modify access, and look for ways to improve the process. They also have statistics helpful for HIPAA compliance showing the number of employees and associates who have access to different systems.

Change management approval workflow

Numara FootPrints is also being used for change management processes and work request approvals in the IT department. Requests for work or changes to any system go through an approval process before being implemented. By integrating automatic processes and workflow, MCCG proactively tracks and manages all their change and approval processes.

"With Numara FootPrints, we now have a system that allows individuals in our company to submit a work request to an approval queue," explained Ramsingh. "This way, none of the systems analysts can change the status of these requests until the appropriate manager approves it. This has been a major benefit for us. More importantly, we can retrieve an audit to view the history of each ticket to see who did what, who approved each work order, who closed the ticket, and much more."

Users at MCCG can submit service requests via multiple channels, as well. For example, a nurse on one of the hospital floors or the director of the HR department may have an issue that needs to be resolved. He or she would then submit a service request using the phone, an email address dedicated to service and support requests, or the web. In many cases, analysts and techs receive immediate notification of tickets that are entered, using the Auto-assignment feature in Numara FootPrints.

Results

Better workflows, more tickets submitted, critical hospital processes automated

MCCG has recognized a significant number of business benefits since implementing Numara FootPrints. Workflow has been the most important improvement for MCCG. From beginning to end, every technology-related process, as well as many others, is now automated and tracked, creating a seamless environment between IT and the outlying departments. According to Ramsingh, the implementation of Numara FootPrints has even improved how the technology department is viewed by customers.

“Workflow has improved because I can now enter a ticket for approval, have an email automatically sent to a manager, and then once the manager approves the work order, I receive an email back and I can instantly start my work on the issue,” explained Ramsingh. Once I finish working on the issue, I close out the ticket, and my manager and our customer are both automatically notified that the issue has been completed. It’s really a seamless and extremely easy process.”

MCCG has noticed a 1200% increase in tickets being logged since implementing Numara FootPrints. In the past, the IT department used to enter an average of 100 tickets per week. Now, they are fielding approximately 1250 service requests per week, roughly twelve times the volume experienced with their previous homegrown system. This increase is not due to “fluff” requests and data; the additional requests are all legitimate. The fact that MCCG has been able to increase service volume without increasing staffing levels, is a testament to the flexibility and usability of the Numara FootPrints system.

Numara FootPrints’ reporting capabilities have provided MCCG with much more information than what they could retrieve in the past. Through Numara FootPrints, MCCG runs nearly 250 customized reports on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. These reports are set up to be generated and emailed to specific distribution lists without any user intervention. In the past, MCCG ran reports, but nothing was available that was as dynamic or standardized as what is capable through Numara FootPrints.

“Numara FootPrints enables our IT department to keep pace with the changing demands of our personnel and technology, and enables us to focus on delivering the technology that helps provide the best healthcare services to our patients,” stated Ramsingh. “The application has truly changed the way the organization as a whole operates when it comes to technology. The IT department has become more efficient and accountable, and the general population outside of IT is embracing the new benefits that this technology is providing. I’ve often referred to MCCG as a living organism in that it is constantly in change. Numara FootPrints is helping to manage and control these changes from a technology standpoint, and also from a process standpoint in many cases.”

The scope of MCCG’s use of Numara FootPrints is unlimited because there will always be a need for this kind of tool. The fact that the company can create as many projects as it needs, without incurring additional costs, makes it an extremely valuable product. For MCCG, the face of IT and the help desk is being transformed into a more positive image, and since implementing Numara FootPrints, the results have been significant on many fronts: tracking and accountability is improved, critical processes are now standardized and enforced, useful data is now readily accessible to appropriate personnel, efficiency is improved, and operations are becoming more centralized.

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Who are we?

Numara Software is a leading provider of integrated IT management solutions for Desktop Management, PC Lifecycle Management, Security & Compliance, Help Desk and Service Desk. Designed to optimize IT management, Numara FootPrints and Numara Track-It! collectively support more than 50,000 customer sites and nearly 20 million IT assets worldwide.



freedom
to simply **choose**
the right solution for you