

Vertical InstantOffice™ MultiSite Reporter

Apria Healthcare: MultiSite Reporter boosts healthcare leader's call handling capabilities.

Case Study

“The robustness and flexibility of Vertical's MultiSite Reporter exceeded our expectations; it is having a positive direct impact on Apria's telephony support cost. It also provides us with extensive and valuable business intelligence about our customer's phone experience.”

Dave Slack
Director, IS Networking & Telecommunications
Apria Healthcare Inc.

In the healthcare industry, Apria Healthcare is recognized for its innovative use of technology to achieve competitive advantage. In keeping with this tradition, in 2002 Apria deployed a Vertical InstantOffice IP-PBX solution to reduce infrastructure complexity and costs and centralize the management of voice and data communications. Today the solution services 100-plus branch offices and Apria recently deployed Vertical InstantOffice MultiSite Reporter. Leveraging the data collected via InstantOffice, MultiSite Reporter enhances the visibility into Apria's distributed operations. This enables management to streamline call-handling processes, provide a consistent, customer-friendly calling experience and optimize the use of the communications infrastructure.

SETTING THE PACE FOR AN INDUSTRY

Apria is the leading national provider of home healthcare products and services, including oxygen and respiratory medications and a broad range of home infusion therapies and medical equipment. With approximately 475 branches and 34 infusion pharmacy locations nationwide, Apria serves over 1.4 million patients annually throughout all 50 states.

Headquartered in Lake Forest, California, the company employs over 9,000 employees nationwide, representing patient services and clinical pharmacy, nursing and respiratory care, operations, sales, logistics, billing and collections. Supported by corporate functions such as Revenue Management, Logistics, Finance, Information Services, Human Resources and Contract Services, Apria's division and regional business units are able to respond quickly to customer and patient needs.

Apria operates in a highly competitive market. The people who are most interested in its services - including patients, their families, and referring physicians - have many options to choose from. It's essential that every incoming call be handled efficiently and correctly. Having grown rapidly through acquisitions, in 2002 Apria wound up with a patchwork of diverse phone systems and voice applications inherited from predecessor companies.

“The distributed nature of the acquisitions created challenges for managing and planning our voice services,” said Dave Slack, Director of IS Networking & Telecommunications for Apria. “Vertical's MultiSite Reporter is a critical tool we use to understand immediately where we have issues and to monitor the daily performance of our voice services across the country.”

AN UNMANAGEABLE SITUATION

In the past, Apria's disparate systems made it impossible to manage the telecommunications environment in a consistent and cost-effective way. For example, move/add/change activities for existing and new telephone systems were nearly unmanageable. Further, Apria had no way to measure daily and weekly call volume patterns to ensure adequate staffing of phone lines at the local level. Managers could not assess the quality of a customer's calling experience, either at the branch level or across the organization. As a result, the company could not establish a baseline for improving customer service.

“We knew we needed a centralized solution that could address current issues, while paving the way for innovative IP-based services in the future,” said Dave Slack. “Additionally, we wanted to eliminate expensive subcontracting at our sites. We selected Vertical's InstantOffice solution after lab-testing many of the IP-PBX solutions

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on the market. Vertical provided stable and robust IP telephony, at a lower cost than their competitors.”

PUTTING ALL THE PIECES TOGETHER

Today, more than 100 branch offices rely on InstantOffice, and that number is increasing. The InstantOffice IP-PBX platform provides these locations with complete voice services through its three main components: the Call Management Suite software provides intelligent call handling and IVR capabilities; the MultiSite Manager application enables remote centralized management of all InstantOffice sites, enabling highly efficient data backup, rapid deployment of new software releases, upgrades and hot fixes and easy configuration changes; and MultiSite Reporter is the business intelligence engine delivering information about branch customer service and employee productivity.

FLEXIBLE REPORTING FOR APRIA'S SENIOR MANAGERS

Having achieved business benefits from InstantOffice, Apria was interested to add MultiSite Reporter to its solution when the product became available. Tightly integrated with the InstantOffice platform and the MultiSite Manager application, MultiSite Reporter provides rich, flexible reporting capabilities. This enables Apria to mine business intelligence - across the enterprise and down to the level of individual workgroups - all from a single interface.

For the first time, Apria executives and line managers can assess the efficiency of their telephony environment (such as peak calling times and most frequently called lines); the effectiveness of their customers' experience (for example, the time spent in queues and the rate of calls abandoned); and levels of facilities usage (e.g., the total time that callers experience an all-trunks-busy state). As Apria's management team worked to meet service level agreement thresholds with major customers, Vertical's MultiSite Reporter (MSR) became a key asset for accomplishing those requirements.

"The robust reporting capabilities within the MSR toolset have allowed the management team within Apria to have a consistent view of our customers' call experience and the associated performance within each branch office," said Lisa Getson, Executive Vice President of Business Development for Apria. "This information has allowed us to identify trends and make enhancements to increase customer satisfaction and reduce 'time to service' by our employees."

With the ability to view data at the corporate, area or

branch level and create reports in popular formats, managers can evaluate their current operations based on timely, objective information and identify areas that warrant further investigation. Furthermore, they can measure the impact of changes in staffing or call-handling procedures to see whether those changes are achieving the desired results.

SMALL CHANGES, BIG IMPROVEMENTS

For example, in routinely monitoring the percentage of calls abandoned at local Apria sites, an exception report revealed that one site had an abandonment rate of 31%, nearly four times the company average. With Vertical's MultiSite Reporter, Apria's centralized telecom staff was able to drill down into the data and quickly isolate the problem: Two agents were only answering about 60 percent of the calls offered to them, resulting in a high abandonment rate. A quick call to the branch revealed an explanation. The agents did not realize they needed to log out of the queue when they left their desks to fax documents, attend meetings or consult with their manager. As a result, the system kept sending them calls that went unanswered. They were instructed on how to log out, and the call-abandoned rate for their local office quickly reverted to the company standard.

"That's one example of the creative way our management team is using MultiSite Reporter to run the business more efficiently and effectively," said Dave Slack. "We're very excited about the possibilities, and we're very pleased with our relationship with Vertical Communications. They really understand the challenges of running a multi-site organization, and that understanding is reflected in all their products."

ABOUT VERTICAL COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

Vertical Communications, Inc. is a leading provider of next-generation IP-based voice and data communications systems for business. Vertical combines voice and data technologies with business process understanding to deliver integrated IP-PBX and application solutions that enhance customer service and business productivity. Vertical's customers are leading companies of all sizes—from small to large and distributed—and include CVS/pharmacy®, Household International and Apria Healthcare. Vertical is headquartered in Cambridge, Mass. and delivers its solutions through a worldwide network of systems integrators, resellers and distributors.

For more information on products and solutions from Vertical Communications, call 800-914-9985 or visit our Website at www.vertical.com.



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