

Company:
Integrated Health Management Services

Integrated Health Management Services, LLC, (IHMS) provides account receivable management services to health care organizations, specializing in third-party billing and eligibility services. IHMS helps hospitals throughout the Southwest US identify which self-pay patients are eligible for government assistance and assists qualified patients and their families through the application process.

Website: www.ihmsllc.com

Business Challenge: Availability of business applications and patient data is vital to IHMS' mission to integrate business and healthcare with compassion and respect. If its employees do not have reliable access to key business tools, they can not provide the eligibility and receivables management services its customers rely on to conduct their business. However, managing the geographically-diverse workstations and a reliable connection to the centralized computing environment became a major IT pain that caused the small IT staff to resort to a reactive management strategy, making it difficult to ensure availability, protect patient data and comply with HIPAA regulations.

Solution: IHMS deployed a remote and automatic systems management solution from Kaseya that gives the organization's IT staff a complete view into its employee workstations and the computing environment. By knowing exactly what systems are on the network – and who is accessing them – and by automating basic administrative tasks, IHMS is able to streamline IT operations and improve application availability for end users. In turn, end users are empowered with the tools and information they need to provide superior service to healthcare organizations and their patients.

Remote Systems Management and Access Helps Healthcare Services Company Improve Customer Service and Meet HIPAA Compliance

Integrated Health Management Services (IHMS), a leading government-based billing and eligibility services company geared toward healthcare organizations in the Southwest US, needed to improve IT support to its more than 100 end users spread out in six geographically-diverse offices. IHMS helps hospitals reduce bad debt and increase cash through government-based eligibility, billing, and follow-up programs, making it essential that the company's staff have access to the business software and patient data they need to do their job.

IHMS's mission statement is to integrate business and healthcare with compassion and respect, meaning that customer service to both the healthcare organizations and their patients is key to the company's success. IHMS places patient financial analysts (PFA) directly in hospitals and clinics so that it can provide face-time with patients – many of which do not speak English as their first language – and also employs a corporate staff and 5 branch offices that support the on-site PFAs and conduct follow ups. It is these employees who are the backbone of the operation.

"Application availability and performance is absolutely crucial for our employees. If we experience any downtime their ability to do their job can be severely affected," said Larry Roberts, principal and IT manager, IHMS. "We need to make sure we're able to maintain the level of support our branch office employees require from a distance."

The responsibility of ensuring end users are able to access the company's patient accounting application falls to IHMS' small IT staff. Consisting of three administrators and Roberts, the team has to ensure systems availability and health, network security, data protection and HIPAA compliance. Unfortunately, with employees spread out over six offices in three states, the task quickly became unmanageable. In addition, the company began a period of rapid growth in 2006, adding 30 employees – a 30 percent expansion.

As a result, administrators continually found themselves reacting to help desk issues, traveling around the region fighting fires and solving basic IT administrative tasks. Roberts, one of the company's founders, slowly saw his workload become dominated by IT issues rather than his senior management duties.

"Like any IT organization, we needed to be proactive in our systems management strategy. Only then could we do our job effectively, enabling the business staff to do its job effectively," Roberts said. "Unfortunately, we just didn't have the tools."

Central Data Center Consolidates IT Management

In order to limit the infrastructure out on the edges of the network – and to reduce remote management requirements – Roberts and his staff deployed a robust CITRIX environment in a centralized data center in Phoenix connected to corporate headquarters across town and branch offices in Denver; Tucson, Ariz.; Santa Barbara, Calif.; and Pasadena, Calif. IHMS's business applications run on two CITRIX Presentation servers in the consolidated data center, including Hospital Manager from Integrated Systems Development, a patient accounting application designed for hospitals under 100 beds. By eliminating server and networking resources in branch offices, IHMS is able to consolidate server management, administration and back up, and only has to manage 105 workstations outside the data center.

Roberts and his staff then deployed a remote and automatic systems management solution from Kaseya to gain a complete view into the workstations and CITRIX servers from one centralized management console. By being able to access any system on the network remotely, administrators are able to troubleshoot any application availability issues that occur without having to travel across state lines. Response times dramatically improved, ensuring uptime of key business systems and empowering employees with the tools and patient information they need to conduct daily operations.

"We ultimately chose Kaseya because it fit perfectly in our existing computing environment and enables our business strategy to centralize support," Roberts said. "The Kaseya solution already provided a secure connection between systems and the management console, so there was no need to spend additional budget on building a secure [virtual private network] between the branch offices and our data center. We simply plugged it in, and we had a secure, reliable connection."

Administrators leverage the solution's asset tracking, patch management, event logs, scripting, backup and ticketing features to automate basic administrative tasks. Now, they are able to identify potential application availability and performance issues before they occur by making sure the latest software updates and security patches are deployed consistently on all workstations and equipment is upgraded or replaced regularly. Automatic tracking and alerting features monitor suspicious activity, enhancing security measures and easing compliance efforts.

Visibility Meets HIPAA Compliance Requirements

The more complete visibility into the network also gives the IT staff a powerful HIPAA compliance tool. Kaseya's tracking and event log features provide Roberts with a reliable account of assets that store sensitive patient information, who has access to the information and what maintenance has been done on the systems. Roberts can even set alarms for suspicious activity, alerting him if data has been compromised before the leak can do much damage.

Administrators can also proactively comply with the regulation by making sure all systems are secured through up-to date patching, software updates and systems health. By eliminating vulnerabilities before they become an issue, IHMS can ensure they are protecting patient data to the letter of the law. Once a year, IHMS hires third-party auditors to validate the company's compliance status, a process that is much easier through documentation by Kaseya.

Key Benefits

- Application availability has empowered IHMS professionals with the tools and information they need to do their jobs and improve customer service
- Downtime is reduced, ensuring government assistance applications are filed accurately and on time
- Administrators have a complete view into workstations and servers, giving the company a powerful HIPAA compliance tool
- IT operations are streamlined, enabling administrators to focus on proactive management, rather than reactive

"One of my administrators said he couldn't ever work for a company that didn't deploy Kaseya because of how much easier it makes his job. The solution is that integral to the way we do business."

-- Larry Roberts, principal and IT manager, IHMS

Business Efficiency Leads to Quality Customer Service

As a result of the Kaseya solution, IHMS is able to ensure its employees have 24x7 access to the company's mission-critical business applications, helping its customers' patients file government assistance paperwork accurately and on time. In addition, by empowering staff with the tools and information they need, IHMS is able to provide superior customer service through an efficient distributed services business model. The Arizona Chamber of Commerce identified this unique business model by naming IHMS as one of the top companies to watch in 2006.

"Kaseya allowed us to shift our focus from reactive to proactive management, streamlining IT operations and improving service to end users," Roberts said. "By improving the availability of our business applications, we've empowered end users with the tools and information they need to work effectively and compassionately with our clients and their patients."

According to Roberts, branch office employees and remote social workers in hospitals are now more likely to report performance issues that they previously would have learned to deal with on a daily basis. All it takes is 10 seconds to issue a trouble ticket and you immediately have an administrator working on the problem. As a result, the distributed technology has become more reliable and easy to use and their jobs have become more streamlined.

In addition, switching to a proactive management strategy has saved the IT staff much time and pain. Patch management, software updates, backup, asset tracking and monitoring are now conducted automatically through scripts or alerts and take a fraction of the time and resources they used to take. Administrators are able to accomplish more over the course of the day and can now spend more time on proactive projects that further streamline processes. Roberts has seen a dramatic decline in the time he spends on IT, allowing him to focus on growing the business.

"One of my administrators said he couldn't ever work for a company that didn't deploy Kaseya because of how much easier it makes his job. The solution is that integral to the way we do business," Roberts said.