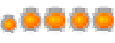


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Case Study: CommuniGate for Med Offices

User Rating: 

Poor  Best

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Written by Pam Baker

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The demands on healthcare organizations continue to mount, adding to the struggle to balance quality of care, regulatory compliance, and the bottom line. As a result, communication requirements are becoming increasingly complex in order to aid employee productivity and collaboration, and still keep overall communication costs and complexity low.

By nature, healthcare is a highly mobile environment wherein doctors, nurses, technicians, administrators and other medical staff are constantly on the move. It's simply impossible to remain seated at a desk in front of a PC for very long. Whether roaming the hospital floor, working from home, or visiting a remote office, it's vital for healthcare professionals to stay in touch and productive while they're on the go.

"We wanted to get away from email applications on the desktop so we could more easily control and deploy email for float nurses and receptionists, and give all users the same email experience no matter where they login," says Ben Bricker, Information Systems Director at Medical Associates of Northwest Arkansas (MANA).

MANA chose CommuniGate Pro (CGP) which is a full featured messaging system. It delivers a single identity for all forms of Unified Communications in an easy yet powerful solution.

The flash based UI Pronto! delivers to end users what CommuniGate Pro brings to communications administrators - a well fastened collection of standards-based communication tools from a single manageable interface. With Pronto! users can easily check e-mail and voice messages as well as collaborate with colleagues via IM, send/receive/play audio and video files, keep organized with advanced calendaring features, and much more.

"We use it primarily for email although it has many other features integrated into it," says Bricker. "I've used CGP for about 8-9 years and while it has matured a lot, it has always been very stable and capable of handling more users than competing mail servers on similar hardware."

Enhanced communications can't mean additional layers of technical complexity. Healthcare IT departments are small - and already tasked with supporting multiple work groups. Diverse communication needs and platforms add to the workload. Any solution

must be highly flexible, as well as easy to deploy and maintain.

CommuniGate Pro is easy to manage through a web-based interface, very robust and standards-based. One of the nicest features is the skinable webmail interface that allows the customer to create their own webmail front-end.

"We have utilized Niversoft's LookOut skin which is a very nice webmail package that allowed us to replace 90% of our user's thick client email applications with webmail access," says Bricker.

Ease of use alone, however is insufficient. Healthcare providers must also protect and secure communications in order to comply with patient privacy and security requirements brought about by HIPAA and other regulations.

"CommuniGate Pro also eliminates issues where some email applications store email on the user's PC which could contain confidential PHI," says Brickner.

There's no acceptable room for downtime in healthcare communications. Medical staff requires five nines reliability for their communications systems and applications to keep productivity high, ensure always-on availability, and rapidly respond to critical situations.

**That's a tall bill to fill in ever- tightening budgets.**

"Cost was also of course a factor for choosing CommuniGate, which was cheaper than products from Microsoft or IBM, both in software licensing, and the hardware needed to run those systems," says Brickner.

**Key benefits for this communications system are:**

- Single address for e-mail, VoIP, secure Instant Messaging and collaboration tools
- Security and compliance (HIPAA and others) for all Internet Communications
- Mobility - remote access to all communication and collaboration tools and synchronization OTA to the mobile
- 99.999% uptime with unique all active dynamic clustering architecture
- Flexibility in multi-OS environments
- Standards-based for easy integration
- CommuniGate Pro and Pronto! are easy to install and maintain

CommuniGate Pro and Pronto! fit well within the healthcare environment overall and present a very user friendly package that is flexible enough to customize easily and scales well to accommodate practice growth.



Pam Baker

**About the author:**

Pam Baker, an American writer, is the author of six books and numerous analytical studies on various technologies for VisionGain Research, headquartered in London. Her published credits also include hundreds of articles for national and international media such as Wireless IQ, Telematics Journal, IT Business Insider, Institutional Investor Magazine (covering the U.S., UK, Belgium, Ireland, Brazil and Turkey), Success Magazine, E-Commerce Times, I Six Sigma Magazine, CIO Today, NewsFactor.com, Enterprise I.T., BPM Today, MacNewsWorld, LinuxInsider, CRM Buyer, CRM Daily, SCI-Tech Today, TechNewsWorld, Georgia Trend Magazine, Economos International Business Magazine, and Knight-Ridder/McClasky newspapers.

Baker was nominated for the 2004 Templeton-Cambridge Journalism Fellowship in Science and Religion in the UK, and is a member of the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

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