

PSC transforms patient management process with IBM and Ascendant Technology.

Overview

■ Challenge

The cosmetic surgery center was in danger of losing patients to competing facilities and faced declining revenues due to its outmoded business processes and poor productivity

■ Why Become an On Demand Business?

PSC needed to respond to its patients' desire for improved service by giving doctors, nurses and administrative staff the ability to share patient information and collaborate in real time

■ Solution

The medical clinic implemented a real-time, responsive patient management system that streamlines business processes and captures patient flow information for immediate use by doctors and employees, allowing faster, better customer service and improved productivity

■ Key Benefits

\$250,000 a year in additional revenue through improved productivity; full payback in just 3 weeks; strengthened patient relationships



As the leading plastic surgery center in Eastern Virginia, PSC prides itself on safety and surgical excellence.

The Plastic Surgery Center of Hampton Roads (PSC), located in Newport News, Virginia, prides itself on its cutting-edge, 14,000-square-foot facility. The five doctors at PSC (www.pschr.com) perform a wide variety of cosmetic surgeries, from Botox injections to nose jobs. Using the latest medical technologies, surgeons can even show patients how they will look after surgery by using a digital imaging system to manipulate their photos.

“We were in danger of losing our patient base to competing clinics because of inferior service. We wanted the ability to instantly call up a patient’s status at any point during his or her visit.”

—Patty Stibbs, Administrator, Plastic Surgery Center

Integrating solutions that help enable On Demand Business

On Demand Business Benefits

- PSC has transformed its internal business processes for superior efficiency, enabling it to respond to patients more quickly, improve profitability by \$250,000 a year, increase staff productivity and realize rapid ROI
- Standards-based environment supports business growth
- Easily integrates with existing PC Local Area Network and most patient administration systems

“WebSphere supports our goal of having a fully automated patient management system. It’s our day-to-day workhorse and, combined with Ascendant’s PASS system, has proved to be a highly robust and reliable solution.”

But in contrast to the clinic's state-of-the-art advances, PSC's office management systems had remained decidedly low-tech. For example, until recently, PSC's internal communications network consisted of a public address (PA) system with strategically located wall speakers, while its patient sign-in system was based on a pen and a sheet of paper. And it had no way to track patient status—a big problem if a friend or relative called to ask how a patient was doing.

The cosmetic surgery business is extremely competitive, and the clinics that succeed are the ones that complement their clinical offerings with prompt, professional and efficient service. Because PSC's outdated business processes were preventing it from doing just that, the facility was at risk of losing its patients to other clinics. “Most patients simply won't stand for long waits in the examination room and bottlenecks at the reception desk, let alone blaring overhead speakers,” explains Patty Stibbs, administrator, PSC. “Doctors, too, have a low tolerance for these things. So not only were we in danger of seeing our patients slip away, but we envisioned our physicians leaving as well.” The doctors—a total of five surgeons whose time is worth between \$1,500 and \$2,500 an hour—often sat idle due to delays in patient processing.

Compounding matters, PSC risked losing its accreditation if it didn't update its registration process to comply with newly mandated federal guidelines under the Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA).

To solve its problems, the \$6 million-a-year clinic needed to transform its patient management processes with an eye toward speed, efficiency, privacy and better patient service. Specifically, PSC needed to employ industry-leading workflow technologies to increase the efficiency of its office—and therefore the productivity of its doctors—and improve the patient experience. A key criterion was the ability to enable real-time communications between doctors, nurses and administrative staff.

“We wanted the ability to instantly call up a patient's status at any point during his or her visit and be able to share that information with key staff throughout the hospital,” explains Stibbs. “By doing so, we could respond to our patients' needs in real time and achieve our goal of delivering exceptional levels of service.”

PSC reshapes face of patient management processes

To accomplish its goals, PSC transformed its internal business processes with an end-to-end, responsive patient management system that tracks patient interactions in real time, improves doctor and clinic productivity and provides a higher level of patient service. The online solution allows PSC to capture critical patient flow information and communicate it instantly—and silently—to any employee who needs to respond to patients with timely services. The system complies with all new HIPAA federal guidelines.

Now, nurses can manage traffic flow between various procedure rooms remotely. If a patient has been waiting in any location for more than 15 minutes, the screens on the 15 terminals located throughout the center turn red. “If I see red, I am going to come out and find out why,” says Stibbs, whose job is to make sure everything runs smoothly in the office. “And the doctors know they are getting backed up if they start seeing red on the screen.” Previously, the nurses had to keep notes on how long each patient had been waiting to see a doctor, which was time-consuming and often ineffective.

PSC’s system is based on IBM Business Partner Ascendant Technology’s Patient Authorization and Sign-in System, called PASS. The PASS application provides custom collaboration and dynamic workflow functionality and organizes internal clinic information into a single Web-based portal, delivering a consolidated view of its patient accounts.

“Ascendant played a significant role in the success of this implementation,” says Stibbs. “Representatives from the company worked side by side with us to help customize PASS to meet our requirements.”

The Ascendant software runs entirely on a pen Tablet PC, which also serves as the patient sign-in tablet. This design enables PASS to easily integrate with PSC’s existing Microsoft® Windows® 2000 server, allowing the center to leverage its current IT investment. The portal is based on WebSphere Portal Express Plus running on top of WebSphere Application Server, the runtime environment for the Java™ components.

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere® Portal Express Plus
- IBM WebSphere Application Server
- IBM Lotus® Instant Messaging

Business Partner

- Ascendant Technology
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–Patty Stibbs

When patients get to the clinic, they sign in on the tablet system. Once the WebSphere software captures this information, administrative staff can check the system for an available examination room and notify the surgeon that the patient is ready to be seen. "WebSphere software supports our goal of having a fully automated patient management system," says Stibbs. "It's our day-to-day workhorse and, combined with Ascendant Technology's PASS, has proved to be a highly robust and reliable solution."

Lotus Instant Messaging (IBM Lotus Sametime®) is used at PSC to speed communications and enhance collaboration, and is proving to be particularly helpful in communicating brief, important messages. For example, using Lotus Instant Messaging a doctor can instantly request that a patient's family be brought into the recovery room. Previously, the doctor would have had to walk to the nurse's station and convey the message personally. If the reception area clerk was on the phone or busy, the doctor would have had to make a return trip later or simply stand around and wait, losing valuable time. "Our doctors now work a lot more productively," says Stibbs. "That makes them happy and it pleases the patients, too."

WebSphere software-based solution boosts physician productivity

The new system has paid for itself in just three weeks thanks to the dramatic increases in physician productivity. Because the five doctors now work much more efficiently, they can each see three more patients a week—with no additional strain on their workloads. Those extra patients, combined with lower administrative costs, help PSC generate an extra \$250,000 in revenue every year.

PSC also responds much more quickly to its patients. The new system speeds up the registration process significantly. It reduces the time patients have to wait to see a doctor and eliminates the need for a staff member to manage the sign-in station. With the improved communications, the solution has increased the productivity of PSC's entire staff, enabling the whole organization to work more efficiently.

Moving forward, the clinic plans to create interfaces to its existing marketing and billing applications, to further streamline its business processes. And it intends to round out its Lotus solution with IBM Lotus Web Conferencing, to conduct eMeetings between its three facilities.

"Our WebSphere software-based solution has completely transformed our business and allowed us to become more responsive to our patients," says Stibbs. "The benefits we receive from this new system continue to amaze me."

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