ShoreTel VoIP helps the Visiting Nurse Association of Boston to improve employee productivity, enhance patient service, and ease system management.

Older system too expensive to manage

The association was using a Verizon Centrex telephone system, which was unreliable, inflexible, and poor quality. In addition, it could not be managed in-house, and it required direct involvement by Verizon to handle administrative tasks.

Flexibility and advanced functionality

The Visiting Nurse Association of Boston is a nonprofit, community-based, home health care agency, committed to serving residents of greater Boston. Besides having an unreliable and management-intense Verizon Centrex telephone system, the Verizon contract had been negotiated for 1,000 very expensive voicemail boxes, so if the association was not using them to capacity, money was inevitably wasted.

Since rehabbing the old system wasn’t viable, VNA of Boston decided to look at other solutions. “We simply needed a high-quality system that was reliable, because of the critical nature of our business, and one that was cost-effective and easy to manage,” says Fran Lorion, chief information officer for VNA of Boston.

VNA of Boston considered solutions from Avaya, Cisco, Interactive Intelligence, Mitel, Nortel, and ShoreTel. The final consideration included ease of use, flexibility, and ability to manage from in-house, and this made the decision easy: VNA of Boston chose ShoreTel.

Challenges:
The Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of Boston was faced with an unreliable, inflexible, and poorly performing telephone system. The previous system required a service provider to manage it and perform moves, adds, and changes, which was costly and inefficient.

ShoreTel Solution:
ShoreTel provided the VNA of Boston with an end-to-end solution, including ShoreTel Voice Switches and ShoreTel IP telephones across the organization’s four Massachusetts location.

ShoreTel Benefits:
- Integration with patient information database
- Ability to manage the system in-house
- Enhanced customer service
- Improved employee productivity
With ShoreTel, care quality goes up, maintenance costs go down

ShoreTel provided VNA of Boston with 14 ShoreTel Voice Switches across its four district offices in Massachusetts. The association has three voicemail servers and 525 voice mailboxes with the ShoreTel system, which is sufficient for present staff members and is flexible enough to grow.

The ShoreTel system is also simple and cost-effective to maintain. “With ShoreTel, our maintenance costs will go down substantially because we can do it ourselves in-house,” says Lorion.

VNA of Boston has integrated the ShoreTel system with its in-house SQL patient information database, which allows receptionists and operators to immediately have access to vital information. Patients are identified even before the phone call is answered and a window "pops" on the screen providing all of the important information necessary to handle the patient’s particular needs. The system also identifies if a nurse is calling in using a patient’s phone, helping determine where the nurse is and improving employee security. The time to obtain these critical details has been reduced from minutes to seconds.

“The integration of ShoreTel with our patient database allows us to quickly determine who is calling and whether it is a patient, clinician, or staff member,” explains Lorion. “We automatically get the diagnoses and personnel associated with the caller if they are a patient. It translates to improved patient satisfaction as well as cost savings due to the time it saves receptionists.”

Enhanced productivity due to powerful call management features

The ShoreTel system provides VNA employees with powerful dialing and call/message management features. With ShoreTel Communicator integrated with Outlook, employees can quickly type in a name, bring up a number, and make calls from local online directories—all with the click of a mouse, right from the desktop. With ShoreTel’s email integration, employees can also manage their email and voicemail activity centrally and efficiently right from their desktop.

“Employees like the fact that voicemail shows up in their email box,” says Lorion. “Access to missed calls also improves productivity because employees can go into ShoreTel Communicator, look up the history of calls that have come in, and simply click a button to call the person back. It saves time and trouble.”
**Formalized call center includes advanced real-time management**

ShoreTel’s Contact Center provides VNA of Boston with a formalized call center by including advanced real-time management and historical measurement tools. Contact Center enables VNA supervisors to ensure agents are delivering consistent service, and provides a comprehensive view of how calls are being handled by each agent. Performance and statistical information lets VNA of Boston know how the center is performing and what needs to be done for further improvement.

“Our call center is separate from the receptionists, and callers dial a special number to reach it,” says Lorion. “We’re using ShoreTel’s Contact Center as a number through which referrals come from hospitals, clinics, and other physicians. The agents have gotten very comfortable with Contact Center so far, and as their comfort grows, we anticipate it will become a very powerful tool for both agents and supervisors.”

**Moving forward**

VNA of Boston looks forward to capitalizing on all of the features of the ShoreTel system. “Our central Intake department is more effective using Contact Center and we expect more improvements as well,” concludes Lorion. “As more people learn everything that ShoreTel Communicator can do, I expect to hear a lot more positive comments. We’ve only tapped the surface of what the ShoreTel system can do because it’s fairly new. The SQL database integration has received a lot of recognition because it is very visible at the front desk. We are glad we took the leap into VoIP with ShoreTel and look forward to more improvements the system will help our organization make.”

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**ShoreTel. Brilliantly simple business communications.**

ShoreTel, Inc. (NASDAQ: SHOR) is a leading provider of brilliantly simple IP phone systems and unified communications solutions powering today’s always-on workforce. Its flexible communications solutions for on-premises, cloud and hybrid environments eliminate complexity, reduce costs and improve productivity.