Hospital Uses DOCS Scheduler to Streamline Schedules, Eliminate Errors

Customer: Kennedy University Hospital

Website: www.kennedyhealth.org

Customer Size: 4,000 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Healthcare

Partner: Acme Express, Inc.

Customer Profile
Kennedy University Hospital is part of a Kennedy Health System, a large provider of healthcare services for several cities in southern New Jersey.

"DOCS Scheduler has so many features that make my life—and the lives of our employees—a lot easier."

Carol Stachowicz, Information Services Manager, Kennedy Health System

Employees at Kennedy University Hospital were frustrated by the limitations of a physician scheduling system built on the Microsoft Outlook email software. They turned to the DOCS Scheduler, a hosted scheduling solution from Acme Express, inc. DOCS Scheduler lets Kennedy administrators control who can enter and edit schedules while giving users an intuitive, easily accessed system for scheduling medical professionals for various tasks. It also provides a simple interface to Outlook.

Contact us for more information:

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Business Needs

Kennedy University Hospital is part of the Kennedy Health System, a large provider of healthcare services for people in southern New Jersey. The hospital serves patients at multiple campuses in the cities of Cherry Hill, Stratford, and Washington Township. It offers a broad range of services, including emergency and acute care, cardiac care, obstetrics, and a wide array of medical, surgical, and wellness programs. It has about 4,000 employees, including 800 physicians.

Managing the schedules of on-call doctors and the hospital staff is a challenge for any large medical operation, and Kennedy is no exception. For years the organization used the Microsoft Outlook e-mail and calendaring application to manage schedules of the many specialists from different departments. Custom templates were used inside Outlook, and each department would fill in its own schedules, a process typically done by clerical staff. This process was time-consuming and cumbersome—and eventually became untenable, says Carol Stachowicz, Information Services Manager for Kennedy Health System.

"It worked fine in the beginning, but as the calendar system grew and more people were using it, it became a real nightmare to manage," says Stachowicz. "For example, we had instances where employees who were unsure of how to use the system inadvertently deleted
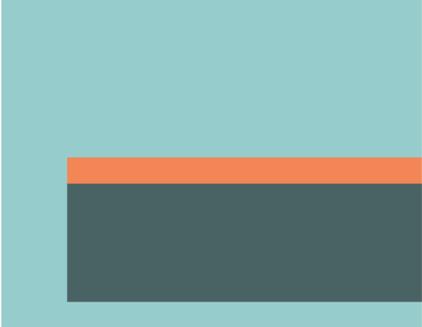
information, or would override a previously scheduled item. Plus, the Outlook calendars got larger and unmanageable—we eventually began to run out of enough memory for the calendars to work properly. I would have to go in and delete older calendars to make room, or else people could not add information."

Solution

Kennedy decided to change from its Outlook scheduling system to Doctors On-Call Schedule (DOCS) from Acme Express, Inc. DOCS Scheduler is a hosted Internet-based solution that allows hospitals, physicians, and medical practices to easily create work schedules for their medical staff. DOCS can be used for a variety of medical scheduling needs, such as on-call physicians, operating rooms, intensive-care units, and clinics. It also provides a simple interface to Outlook.

Kennedy worked with Acme on configuring DOCS for the needs of the organization. It went live in early 2010 after the software was tailored to the needs of individual groups within Kennedy. "The installation of DOCS was very straightforward," says Stachowicz. "It was probably one of the smoothest software installations I've ever been through. It was also considerably less expensive than alternative solutions that we evaluated—in some cases up to 60 percent less."

There are approximately 60 users of the system at Kennedy who are authorized to enter and edit information. An accounting system tracks scheduling history, providing multiple reports that can be used to examine work distributions. Information on the DOCS system can be viewed by any Kennedy employee with access to the organization's intranet. It can also be accessed remotely, with information protected by a combination of user names and passwords.

Benefits

With the installation of DOCS Scheduler, Kennedy University Hospital has an easy-to-use system that eliminates most of the scheduling challenges that plagued the organization in the past. Security measures help prevent accidental overrides and deletions of information. Remote access provides a great deal of flexibility for employees who are not on site. DOCS Scheduler also enables permanent input of contact information, eliminating the need to continually re-enter information about doctors and other medical staff who need to be put on the schedule. Kennedy now has the best of both worlds with DOCS providing an efficient way to schedule and an interface to Outlook.

Enhanced Protection for Information

The DOCS Scheduler eliminates the problems that Kennedy experienced in the past when employees accidently deleted or overrode existing scheduling information. "We have configured DOCS Scheduler so that data entry is restricted by department. For example, if someone is authorized to enter scheduling information in the anesthesia department, that is the only department schedules they can access," says Stachowicz. She adds that there are alerts to prevent accidental overrides of existing schedule items. "The larger system is locked down to all but about six people. This prevents unauthorized entries, deletions, and mistakes from being put into the system."

Remote Access to Schedules

As a hosted, Internet-based solution, DOCS Scheduler allows Kennedy employees to view information remotely, and for authorized users to enter and edit schedules even when they are not on site. "This feature can be extremely useful," says Stachowicz. "During one period we had a big snow storm. A lot of employees could not make it to work, including our operating room manager. She was able to easily log on from her home PC and modify schedules to account for doctors and other employees who were unable to get to work."

Permanent Contact Information

With the Outlook scheduling system, users would need to manually enter contact information repeatedly when creating schedules. Now, with DOCS Scheduler, contact information is entered once and then becomes a permanent part of the system. "This saves a lot of time," says Stachowicz. "You simply point and click on a person's name, click on a timeframe for the schedule, and it's done. In Outlook, we would have had to type the person's cell, beeper, and other numbers in every time a schedule was created, or do a copy and paste for each day and timeframe. DOCS Scheduler has so many features that make my life—and the lives of our employees—a lot easier."