

Digital Faxing Enables Reliable and Cost-Efficient Medical Record Exchange

Florida Heart and Vascular Associates ensures HIPAA-compliant document exchange history and saves thousands of dollars per year with Open Text Fax Appliance integrated with Konica Minolta bizhub MFPs, Allscripts electronic health records and practice management

Industry

Healthcare

Company



Open Text Partner



KONICA MINOLTA

Business Challenge

- Tracking delivery of thousands of faxes per week
- Frustrations at fax machines
- Cost- and time-intensive manual faxing

Business Solution

Open Text Fax Appliance integrated with four Konica Minolta® bizhub C451 MFPs, PageScope Data Administrator Utility, Microsoft® Exchange®, Allscripts® electronic health records and practice management

Business Benefits

- Detailed history of faxed medical records for HIPAA compliance and litigation protection
- Immediate and easy document exchange—no more busy signals
- Thousands of dollars in costs savings related to increased productivity and elimination of fax machines

Florida Heart and Vascular Associates is a regional provider of high quality, comprehensive cardiovascular care. The group includes five physicians and 50 employees.

Challenge

Managing medical records for close to 100 patients per day is not for the faint of heart. Florida Heart and Vascular Associates sends and receives approximately 3,000 faxed pages per week. Incoming files from primary care physicians detail prior procedures and other medical history. Outgoing documents summarize recommendations or services provided by Florida Heart and Vascular Associates' specialists. Faxes are also sent to insurance companies as proof of procedure.

Faxing is the most convenient method for exchanging paper-based medical records. All communications are regulated by HIPAA for confidentiality and detailed history. "In the last couple years, HIPAA began requiring a log of every time a piece of information comes into or out of our office," says Chris Patterson, IT administrator with Florida Heart and Vascular Associates. For years, the office sent and received faxes via five fax machines, each with its own line and number. "We would only give out a main fax number in company information, causing that line to be constantly barraged with incoming faxes," Patterson notes. Many employees also relied on the same machine to send records. "Faxes could be delayed and not get to doctors for hours at a time." Aside from challenges in timely turnaround, it was a physical impossibility to store all the information, according to Patterson. "We could only store fax confirmations that showed how many pages were sent."

Florida Heart and Vascular Associates reached its tipping point to update its fax solution when high volumes demanded another fax line. "We looked at the cost involved and found it wasn't effective to fax that way anymore," Patterson says. "We needed a way to consolidate our faxing procedure."





“With the detailed history we have through Fax Appliance, we ensure compliance with HIPAA, and we lessen the possibility of a lawsuit. That peace of mind is a big thing.”

Chris Patterson,
IT administrator, Florida Heart and Vascular Associates

Solution

Employees now handle document-related tasks, including faxing, directly from four Konica Minolta bizhub C451 multi-function devices integrated with Open Text Fax Appliance, formerly FaxPress.

Florida Heart and Vascular Associates first used FaxPress with Allscripts, its electronic health records program for billing, scheduling, and charting. While the office is digitizing new medical records, there are still existing paper-based files to manage. “If we had known then what we know now, fax integration with MFPs would have been our number one priority when we installed Open Text digital fax,” Patterson relates. “Open Text Fax Appliance by itself is nice,” he explains, “But the Web- or Windows-based interface will only get you so far when you still have paper-based charts like we do. Fax Appliance integration with the Konica Minolta MFPs works so well, we eliminated all of our fax machines except one, which is kept for backup purposes.”

Via Fax Appliance, incoming records, as well as confirmations for delivered charts, arrive as PDF files to email addresses assigned to each Konica Minolta MFP. The files are routed to a public folder in Microsoft Outlook® where employees have convenient access to view, forward, store, and print faxes as needed. Fax Appliance aids communication with other healthcare providers. While many are shifting records to electronic data, there is no way for all systems between separate offices to “talk” to one another. Digital fax is the only consistent technology that enables communication between disparate systems while keeping the information electronic.

PageScope Data Administrator Utility, available on the Konica Minolta C451s, has further improved fax capabilities with a single address book propagated to all the networked devices, thereby eliminating the need for manual input.

“What impresses me most about Fax Appliance is its ability to hide behind the scenes and work in the background,” Patterson says. “A lot of solutions require a Web or client interface, but the integration with our Konica Minolta MFPs makes the faxing experience the same for users.” Even so, a Web-based interface is useful to Florida Heart and Vascular Associates professionals, including doctors working from home and employees accessing the system from branch offices.

Results

The management and exchange of medical information via a centralized solution provides peace of mind as well as increased productivity, all with the benefit of substantial cost savings.

Protection

Faxes are now backed up, easy to access, and digitally archived for seven years. “Using Fax Appliance, we now have all the information about faxed records logged, categorized, and ready for review,” Patterson says. He explains that the data is a priority both for patient care and as a safeguard in the case of potential litigation. It can protect the office to have detailed records if there were a malpractice suit for patient identity theft or delay of urgent medical results. “With the detailed history we have through Fax Appliance, we ensure compliance with HIPAA and lessen the possibility of a lawsuit. That peace of mind is a big thing.”

Productivity

“Now we have an open fax line at all times,” Patterson says. In fact, he notes that other offices and hospitals have become more responsive because they never get busy signals, and they know faxes will not be lost. Most importantly, patients and physicians are not left waiting for records.



“For outgoing mail that generates a large number of busy signals, we set our Fax Appliance to delay delivery until their machines are less busy,” Patterson says, then adds, “Also, we tell them, ‘You need Fax Appliance, so we can send you information without a delay!’”

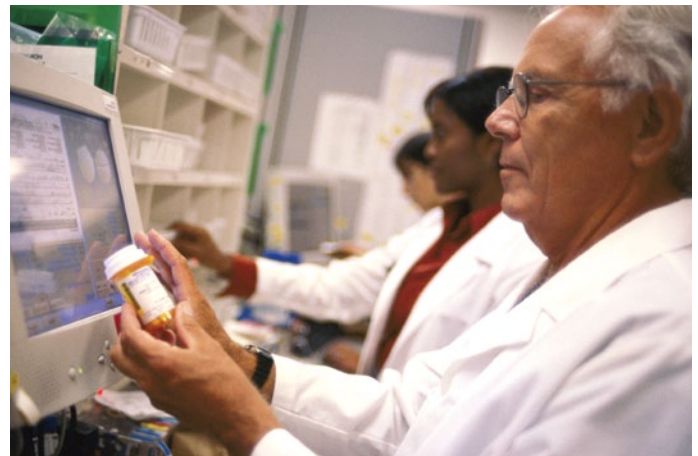
Patterson estimates that Fax Appliance saves each of the medical assistants two hours every day by eliminating time wasted waiting for confirmations, sorting through paper stacks, and resending files due to busy signals. Total time savings add up to two-and-a-half full-time employees. Several other features enhance convenience, including an address book on the MFP that allows the designation of recipients from more than 5,000 addresses.

Cost savings

“We knew Fax Appliance would reduce expenses, but we didn’t need to calculate all the numbers. When you’re talking about maybe a month and a half to obtain a full return on investment, it is a no-brainer,” Patterson says.

A few examples:

- Avoided costs for installing a new fax machine as well as fax-enabling an additional office location to meet demand in fax traffic: \$1,000 for a new device, \$1,500 to run a new fax line, and \$1,000 per year in maintenance fees
- Eliminated the equivalent of 2.5 full-time medical assistant positions for an overhead salary savings of close to \$65,000 per year
- Reduced paper use by at least a ream (500 sheets) per day
- Save \$90 per month in fax machine toner



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