

NorthShore University HealthSystem

Aspect® Unified IP® and Aspect's Workforce Optimization Suite Help Contact Center Provide Exceptional Patient Care, Creating Competitive Differentiator in Tough Market

The Company

Located in Chicago's northern suburbs, Northshore University HealthSystem (Northshore), formerly known as Evanston Northwestern Healthcare, is an integrated healthcare system comprised of 68 medical offices and facilities, and has been named as one of the nation's 100 Top Hospitals® by Thomson Healthcare®, a leading source of healthcare information products. NorthShore is also recognized as a leader for implementing technology and improving processes to advance the safety and quality of patient care. The hospital operates one contact center with 200 agent seats that respond to calls regarding Financial Services, the NorthShore Medical Group, and Patient Access.

The Challenge

To stay competitive with other leading hospital systems in the Chicago area, NorthShore recognized that the contact center needed to provide the best possible patient service, so the hospital assessed its contact center operations and found that it was lacking a number of capabilities needed to improve customer interaction strategies. The hospital was using an antiquated automatic call distributor (ACD) and needed to be able to record and monitor customer calls to gauge quality. In addition, because all of its existing contact center applications were siloed, they were unable to get an end-to-end view of agent performance because reports varied from application to application. And, because they only had one manager for 68 agents, the agents weren't able to receive the personal training and supervision that would help them do their jobs better. Lastly, NorthShore was leveraging spreadsheets to manually schedule agents for contact center shifts.

Based on the findings of the assessment, NorthShore determined that the contact center needed a single, scalable solution that offered a variety of contact center capabilities and that it needed to embark on an extensive training and recruiting overhaul, which would require an advanced workforce management tool.

The Solution

The organization began a new chapter in patient care by embarking on a people-focused initiative supported by the appropriate technology. NorthShore evaluated a number of contact center solutions and ultimately selected Aspect Unified IP from Aspect for its unified software platform. Aspect Unified IP is a complete contact center solution that offers unified communications capabilities and unites inbound, outbound and blended multichannel contact (voice, email, the Web and fax), with voice self service, recording, quality management, and unified reporting and administration. The organization also decided to implement Aspect Workforce Management to assist with its people-focused initiatives in the contact center. Aspect Workforce Management helps multiskill, multisite, and multichannel contact centers accurately schedule agents and forecast call volumes to plan, manage and optimize performance. This ensures that agents with the appropriate skill sets are scheduled based on specific call volumes and reduces the amount of time managers spend setting up schedules manually.



"We wanted to turn the contact center into a strategic asset to NorthShore, but we needed leading-edge technology. Aspect Unified IP really offered all of the capabilities that we needed to transform our contact center into a high-tech, high-touch competitive advantage."

Fran Horner
Senior Director of Patient Access,
University HealthSystem

Products

- Aspect Unified IP
- Aspect Workforce Management

Results

- Increased call volume 18 percent without adding additional headcount
- Increased outpatient pre-registration by 25 percent without adding additional headcount
- Increased call handling to 82 percent of calls answered in 30 seconds or less
- Reduced employee turnover by 58 percent



NorthShore also launched a training process, in partnership with the human resources department, to develop new recruiting assessments to engage good employees and establish a clear career path for contact center agents and supervisors. Through the formal training program, employees were tested on their knowledge and skills before being placed in the contact center. The end goal was to ensure that agents were able to provide patients with a positive experience by having the right skills and knowledge needed to meet their needs.

The Results

The NorthShore contact center is now empowered with advanced capabilities to ensure that patients calling the organization are receiving the same high level of service they would get if they were standing in the hospital. With Aspect® Unified IP®, the contact center has blended call management capabilities and is able to handle both incoming calls from patients looking to schedule appointments, register or update insurance information, or to speak to a doctor or nurse about a medical condition, as well as launch outgoing calls using the dialer functionality, for functions like appointment reminders and checking on insurance billing status.

Aspect Unified IP can route each caller to the most appropriate agent within seconds by using dialed number identification service (DNIS), data on available agents and skill sets and customer profiles. In addition, the product's intelligent network routing links multiple locations and leverages centralized realtime statistics, enabling calls to be automatically rerouted from one site to another until the caller speaks to a live person, all of which can happen almost instantly.

NorthShore is also committed to continuously improving customer care, and is using the integrated voice self-service functionality of Aspect Unified IP to conduct 30 second post-call satisfaction surveys. Patients are given the option of taking the survey following an interaction with the contact center where they are asked three short "yes or no" questions: 1) Was the representative helpful? 2) Did they meet your needs? 3) Will you choose NorthShore University HealthSystem for future medical care? At the end of the survey, patients are also given the option of leaving their name and a message, or speaking to a supervisor.

In addition, the company is taking full advantage of the interaction recording capabilities of Aspect Unified IP to record 100 percent of its contact center interactions for quality monitoring purposes. They are using the information gathered in the calls for training purposes and call optimization. Taking it one step further, NorthShore is leveraging the tight integration between Aspect Unified IP recording and its Aspect Speech Analytics solution¹ to automatically analyze calls and gain a view of customer concerns and how agents responded. NorthShore also uses agent scorecards to measure key performance indicators, such as adherence and customer satisfaction. Aspect Unified IP integrates with the Epic solution, NorthShore's electronic patient medical records database. This allows non-clinical staff in the contact center to access detailed patient records and provide customized information based on physician orders, diagnosis, previous appointments, and other medical information.

The capability of Aspect's workforce optimization suite is helping the company schedule agents and forecast call volumes to ensure the right number of employees are available to respond to calls. For example, the NorthShore supervisors are using Aspect® Workforce Management to determine multiple staffing scenarios for different environments, such as staff required to work on Monday, which is normally the day that customer call volume is highest.

The organization is looking forward to implementing more advanced customer care capabilities, such as Web integrations for chat and email interactions and more outbound patient care campaigns using the dialer and voice portal. NorthShore, which has received numerous awards for both patient care and its use of technology to enhance service, is focused on maximizing the capabilities that Aspect Unified IP and Aspect's workforce optimization suite offer.

"The patient experience doesn't begin when they step into the hospital or doctor's office, it begins the minute they pick up the phone and we believe that technology, like Aspect Unified IP and Aspect Workforce Management, is helping us achieve our strategic business objective – making the patient experience as valuable and as pleasant as possible."

Fran Horner
Senior Director of Patient Access,
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¹ Aspect Speech Analytics, powered by Nexidia

About Aspect

Aspect builds customer relationships through a combination of customer contact software and Microsoft platform solutions. For more information, visit www.aspect.com.

