

SOLID RADIOLOGY IT VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS STREAMLINING OPERATIONS AT A LEVEL ONE TRAUMA CENTER

Hartford Hospital is an 879-bed hospital performing approximately 180,000 diagnostic imaging procedures a year. As the largest hospital in the State of Connecticut, with a Level 1 trauma center, 26 intensive care units, a staff of 7,000 and 1,200 affiliated physicians, it needed a high-performance PACS.

Hartford Hospital began to implement electronic imaging in 1999, with a mini-PACS system to support a newly acquired multi-slice CT scanner as well as recently acquired computed radiography equipment. Once approval was received to acquire a comprehensive PACS, the hospital selected a Sectra PACS. Hartford Hospital was impressed with the capabilities of the system and the fact that Sectra PACS systems were being utilized in hospitals of all sizes throughout the world.

Establishing a direct vendor relationship

In 2003, Sectra did not have an independent North American sales team. Its PACS was being exclusively sold, configured, and serviced by a multinational diagnostic modality and therapy equipment vendor.

When Sectra established its own North American team to independently sell and provide service for its PACS, Hartford Hospital decided it might be prudent to investigate switching its service contract directly to Sectra.

"The advantage of working directly with a manufacturer, especially with respect to a healthcare IT system like a PACS, is that a partner relationship can be established," Lee Goldman, M.S. Chief of Imaging Physics and Radiology Engineering, explained. "It is much easier and more efficient to communicate. We can talk directly with design engineers about new product direction. Software upgrades are more readily available, and may be less expensive because there is no third-party reseller mark-up. Service responsiveness increases.



The primary advantage from the perspective of Hartford Hospital's PACS administrator and IT staff was the ability to talk directly to Sectra's customer support team. "You can convey requests directly to the people who will fulfill them. You can discuss problems that need to be resolved with the engineers who are responsible for resolving them," said Vladilen Bokotey, M.S. Manager Radiology Informatics Services. "When I called my counterparts, PACS administrators at hospitals with a Sectra PACS sold by a third party vendor who had converted to service contracts provided by Sectra itself, they told me that our calls to the customer support desk would be answered promptly. Solutions would be proposed rapidly. Service issues would be resolved - fast. Now that is what I wanted to hear."

SECTRA

“Our PACS experience has made us realize that it is best to deal directly with a manufacturer of an IT system. Our switch in our service contract to Sectra was the very best thing that we could have done to optimize PACS performance.”

Bob Rice, radiology department administrator

THE BENEFIT OF PACS TO HARTFORD HOSPITAL

PACS development and implementation has been one of the greatest advancements we have seen in radiology in recent years. As digital technologies evolved, the quantity of data that required processing and evaluation simply exploded. PACS was the solution that made working with these imaging data files possible. Without PACS infrastructure, we would not have been able to introduce into mainstream radiology many of our advanced imaging modalities such as multidetector CT and advanced 2D and 3D applications.

PACS brings different advantages to different members of our healthcare team. It has radically changed operational workflow for technologists who have seen streamlined operations, allowing for more time to perform examinations and care for patients, and less time on filming, repeating studies, making annotations and handling paperwork. Our radiologists have seen great efficiency in delivery of studies to the reading room, now the computer workstation, for review and diagnosis. Prior studies are immediately available for comparison and lost films are a thing of the past. For the ordering clinicians, this means extremely fast turnaround times and nearly instant remote access to images and reports from anywhere in the world at any time.

But perhaps most importantly, for the patient, PACS translates into faster diagnosis and treatment, greater accuracy, specialty consultations via electronic networks, and vastly improved communication amongst the healthcare team. PACS allows the integration of imaging studies with voice recognition dictation systems, radiology information systems and various hospital information systems that reach beyond the walls of Hartford Hospital to wherever the information is needed, whenever it is needed, to care for our patients.

Stuart K. Markowitz, M.D.
Chairman
Department of Radiology



“During downtime escalation procedures, regardless of how good the third-party service provider is, the ultimate level of support is going to be from the manufacturer of the software. The ability to get back online as rapidly as possible was one of the reasons that we felt we could have better service by contracting with Sectra directly.”

Lee Goldman, M.S. Chief of Imaging Physics and Radiology Engineering

The importance of effective response time

“It made sense that calling the manufacturer directly with a problem would get it resolved more rapidly than by calling a third-party service provider. There is always the uncertainty that the content and level of urgency of the message may not be conveyed as accurately or in as much detail as is needed,” Mr. Bokotey pointed out.

Mr. Goldman agrees. “During downtime escalation procedures, regardless of how good the third-party service provider is, the ultimate level of support is going to be from the manufacturer of the software. The ability to get back online as rapidly as possible was one of the reasons that we felt we could have better service by contracting with Sectra directly.

When Sectra North America assumed the service contract, they sent a cross-functional team, including the sales account executive and the vice president of service and support, to thoroughly evaluate the overall performance of the PACS at Hartford Hospital. By leveraging the team’s knowledge of many installations in North America, the Sectra team made recommendations for changes in the design of the system that further optimized its performance. A software upgrade was also recommended.

“Every question we asked about proposed changes was answered with a ‘yes, we can do this’ or ‘yes, we can resolve this’ with a specific time line proposed,” Mr. Bokotey said. “We were assured that there would be no forklift upgrade. The work to create a more robust PACS system design would be performed in the background. The planned schedule to do this was fast. I believed the Sectra cross-functional team, because the engineering discussions my IT colleagues and I had with them made sense. We agreed that the design change recommendations that the Sectra team proposed would be the robust and redundant system that Hartford Hospital required.”

This provided Hartford Hospital with the opportunity to take advantage of renegotiating the financial terms of the PACS utilization licenses. “We were able to switch our individual use license agreement based on the number of workstations being utilized to an institutional site agreement based on the number of procedures performed. Having this direct business relationship with Sectra North America gave us the ability to negotiate new terms. We now have the flexibility that we need with respect to diagnostic and clinical workstation utilization. Our new terms with Sectra are more beneficial to the hospital,” Mr. Goldman explains.

A focus on increased training

A comprehensive refresher training program coincided with the software upgrade. A team of super-users who provided training for the staff, worked with Sectra’s clinical support specialists to design a schedule that would be convenient for the 40 radiologists and 130 FTE equivalent technologists to learn the new features of the software upgrade and also have refresher training to become more efficient, “power users” of the workstations.

“The clinical specialists from Sectra were very flexible with respect to providing training during the hours that were best for everyone in the radiology department at Hartford Hospital. This meant that sessions were scheduled during the day and the night, and they even accommodated one radiologist at 6:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning”, the super-users said. “Even though this was just training for a software upgrade, the clinical specialists worked one-on-one with the radiologists. The Sectra team didn’t downplay the needs of our technologists. They utilized this opportunity to make sure that the technologists were properly trained, and took extra time with the staff who had additional questions.”

"By making images available instantly whenever they are needed and by working smoothly with our integrated speech recognition reporting system, we were able to reduce report turnaround time from an average of 24 hours to one hour or less."

Bob Rice, radiology department administrator



Vladilen Bokotey, M.S., Manager Radiology Informatics Services and Lee Goldman, M.S., Chief of Imaging Physics and Radiology Engineering

Remote monitoring for a greater peace of mind

A direct service contract with Sectra also meant that Hartford Hospital could contract for remote monitoring of the system. PACSGuard-Monitoring oversees all the critical components of both hardware and software.

"We saw a big change in overall performance once we installed PACSGuard Monitoring," Mr. Bokotey said. "Small problems did not escalate into performance issues. We wished that we could have had this service from the first day we installed the PACS."

"What our radiologists like about the Sectra PACS is that it enables a workflow that makes them heroes to the other hospital departments," noted Bob Rice, radiology department administrator. "By making images available instantly whenever they are needed and by working smoothly with our integrated speech recognition reporting system, we were able to reduce report turnaround time from an average of 24 hours to one hour or less."

The radiologists get their work done more rapidly. Now that we've implemented web access, they can sign off on their reports from any location. Our Sectra PACS has revolutionized the way that our radiologists work."

"Our PACS experience has made us realize that it is best to deal directly with a manufacturer of an IT system. Our switch in our service contract to Sectra was the very best thing that we could have done to optimize PACS performance," said Mr. Rice. "We are very glad that we investigated this option."

Contact information

Sectra North America Inc.
2 Enterprise Drive Suite 507
Shelton, CT 06484
Ph: 203 925 0899
E-mail: info.na@sectra.com
sectra.com

SECTRA