

Case Study: Imaging

Gaining Control of Paper-based Processes

Just three years ago, Clinical Lab Partners of Newington, Conn., was a dramatically different company than it is today. That's because the independent, regional clinical lab was being overwhelmed by paperwork.

According to Renee Cannon, co-manager for patient accounts at the lab, her department was processing between 3,000 and 3,500 accessions each night — and all of the paper requisitions, along with lengthy remittances, were being stored on site.

"There were boxes on the floor, boxes on top of filing cabinets, boxes in the aisles... we had boxes everywhere," Cannon said. "Our safety and building manager was constantly warning us about fire hazards."

In addition to the storage problem, the lab was also losing hours of productivity due to the daunting task of locating records. Because each record was sorted by date, lab employees had to manually search through thousands of records to find a single requisition or remittance.

Document imaging

Clinical Lab Partners needed a better way to store and search for documents, and Ypsilanti, Mich.-based Freedom Imaging Systems had the solution. A leading data management and solutions developer, Freedom Imaging Systems offered a document imaging system, RICAR (Record Image Capture and Retrieval). The software suite would allow the clinical lab to eliminate the manual handling of documents.

Freedom's vice president, David Gillis, worked with Cannon, the lab's designated project manager, to digitize each requisition and remittance. The lab could then use the photo images as its storage system — satisfying the legal requirement of maintaining those records for seven years — and eventually disposing of the paper records.

"Not having to store the paper anymore was fabulous," said Cannon. "We saved a ton of money, just in storage fees." In fact, the lab estimates it saved between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per year in storage/supply costs with RICAR.

Cannon said that searching for records is straightforward with RICAR. "If you need a remittance, you can go into the Freedom system and pull it up on your PC desktop," she explained. "It works the same way with requisitions. If you need one, you can access it from any workstation in the building. You never have to get up from your desk."

In addition to imaging requisitions and remittances, Clinical Lab Partners also began using Freedom's document imaging system to digitize its client contracts, test codes and other internal documents.

A new system

Following the successful installation of RICAR, it was time to take the lab's productivity to a new level with Freedom's Workflow solution. The system automates Clinical Lab Partner's paper-based



Photo courtesy of Freedom Imaging Systems

workflow processes.

It provides flexibility by sorting and resorting requisition data and sending it to definable processing queues.

The Workflow system scans requisitions quickly and places them into categories — eliminating the time-consuming process of manually sorting three to four boxes of paperwork each night. "As you can imagine, as you are manually sorting these things and tossing them around from one department to another, you run the risk of losing things. And we had nowhere to store them," Cannon commented.

Cannon estimates that Workflow has eliminated two to three hours in lost productivity per employee in the lab's charge entry department. In addition to boosting productivity, Cannon said the system allows for improved communication among employees and departments.

"Our users connected very quickly with the system," she said. "They love the control it gives them. They can see the whole picture instead of just their part." Cannon added that the lab's management particularly likes the productivity measurements and reporting functionality built into Workflow.

System support

When searching for a document imaging solution, Clinical Lab Partners wanted a company that would be responsive to its needs. Freedom Imaging Systems proved to be the best match.

"Customer service support is remarkable," said Cannon. "I heard nothing negative from our staff about the system. Everyone was impressed with how fast it was installed, the training they received and the fact that it was an easy system to use."

For more information on imaging or workflow solutions, contact Freedom Imaging Systems at (734) 327-5600 or visit the company's website at www.freeimage.com. ■