



CASE STUDY AUTOMATION SMOOTHES HOSPITAL OPERATIONS

South County Hospital • Wakefield, RI

Automating the production of daily reports for various departments, creating a downtime system and automatically posting online payments saves thousands of hours and ensures accuracy.

South County Hospital in Wakefield, Rhode Island, is an independent, non-profit, 100-bed acute care hospital offering the latest advancements in technology and a comprehensive range of medical and surgical services. The hospital prides itself in providing southern Rhode Island with the highest level of expertise, technology, and a comprehensive range of advanced inpatient, outpatient and home health services.

Like any innovative hospital, South County always wants to make sure it provides high quality, efficient patient care while maintaining smooth operations. This means the health of the hospital's business side, or back office, is just as important as the clinical side.

In an effort to organize the back office, the IS staff implemented an automation technology to facilitate and automate many repetitive manual tasks, such as the production of daily reports for various departments throughout the hospital, preparing downtime reports in case of a system failure, and ensuring the accurate transfer of online payments made on the hospital's Web site into MEDITECH. By automating these workflows, South County also maximized the use of its Intranet, giving managers easy online access to payroll and expense reports, and eliminating the hassle that accompanies the paper process.

Automating Daily Reports and Maximizing Intranet Use

When South County purchased its MEDITECH system, Gary Croteau, Assistant Vice President and Chief Information Officer and his IS team realized that one major component missing from the health information system (HIS) was the ability to put reports into production. At the time, Gary and his team were managing report production manually, which was time consuming for the IS resource side. In addition, the demands of teaching and assisting staff to run reports were not efficient.

After considering several technologies, Gary and his team decided to evaluate scripting tools as a possible solution for producing reports and found Boston WorkStation™, a task automation software developed by Boston Software Systems. The software allows IT departments to develop, test and run scripts that simplify processes across the hospital. It automates regular, repetitive, time-intensive tasks, data updates or uploads that are done manually, and ensures the accurate flow of information.

"Our users are not IT people, and they don't necessarily need to learn the technical process of generating and accessing a report," said Gary Croteau "They simply need to quickly obtain the information they are looking for. We felt the best way to handle this was to generate these



reports automatically using Boston WorkStation and maximize the use of our Intranet as a distribution mechanism for our users.”

In order to run daily reports, the IS staff uses Boston WorkStation to automate their production and push them out to the Intranet. It does not require additional resources from the IS staff to run reports because the process is automated. On a daily basis, Boston WorkStation scripts go through 50 different reports, which are built via MEDITECH NPR and Microsoft Access. The script reliably maneuvers between MEDITECH NPR and Microsoft Access report production and pushes the output to the Intranet, a portal available to all employees and easy to access. This process saves IS staff and users as much as a thousand hours each year.

“Almost every department has some sort of report that is accessible through the Intranet as a result of Boston WorkStation,” Gary adds. **“By automating the reports, the IS staff only has to teach the management team or key users how to access the Intranet and find the reports in a consistent, logical way. Because all reports are now archived on the Intranet, whether they are looking for the current report, last year’s or last month’s report, whatever the case may be, they will find it organized within the Intranet.”**

“Boston WorkStation doesn’t go on vacation. It is reliable every single day and is simply more efficient.”

*Gary Croteau
South County Hospital*

Payroll and Expense Reports Go Green

After witnessing what Boston WorkStation had accomplished, the IS staff found another way to gain efficiency using Boston WorkStation. The payroll department moved towards a similar process of automatically distributing payroll reports to all managers every other week. Today, the accounting department kicks off a Boston WorkStation script to publish the payroll reports to managers with summaries for every employee in his/her department outlining what each employee has accrued for paid-time-off for the pay period and year-to-date.

In addition to distributing payroll reports, the payroll department developed similar reports for its department expenses. Using Boston WorkStation, the accounting department eliminated publishing expense reports on paper and instead posted these via the Intranet, which is a unique way Boston WorkStation is helping South County “go green.” Furthermore, posting these expense reports via the Intranet is saving a substantial amount of time every month from having to run reports manually, print them, and distribute them to all the department managers via inter-office mail.

“Expense reports can easily get lost, said Gary. “Managers may get the current report today, but most often, they may be looking for last month’s or last year’s report. In that case, the accounting department has to re-run and re-send the report to the manager. This process went away with automation because, like the daily report production, these expense reports are archived over time and can be found in the Intranet as a PDF file ready to print.”

Continuing Patient Care While Systems are Down

Like many hospitals that are transitioning to electronic medical records, the thought of a system failure concerned Gary and his IS team. It was very important for IS to find a way to keep the hospital fully functional in case of a system failure.

“The advent of advanced clinical systems has created the urgent need for downtime preparation,” said Gary. “Before electronic records, this was never really an issue because you flipped over a paper chart and you were all set. However, today, even in the absence of a paper chart, care has to continue. Nurses must know when the last medication may have been given to a patient. If the hospital system goes down, how will they continue to care for their patient? Once again, we found the answer in scripting.”

Using Boston WorkStation, South County developed a downtime process to help transition records from electronic to paper, providing instant access to pertinent patient information. A Boston WorkStation script sits on a dedicated server where it gathers and delivers the critical patient data to the local PC hard-drives of each inpatient unit. Each of South County’s six inpatient units has a designated PC that is being updated every 15 minutes around the clock. In the event of unexpected downtime, each unit can refer to its designated PC and see the most current reports for their census.

Scripting Expedites the Online Payments Process

Committed to improving the patient experience, South County deployed online bill pay which allows hospital patients to visit the it’s website to pay bills online. Keeping the business side of the hospital in mind, South County automated the process of downloading online transactions and posting the payment directly onto MEDITECH. On a daily basis, Boston WorkStation queries the website’s database, looks for transactions and then posts them through the MEDITECH BA/R module on the proper patient account. Automating this particular touch point within the revenue cycle eliminates the possibilities of error and expedites the payment process.

“If one has a designated staff member checking on an online transaction and then transferring it to the patient account, there are bound to be inaccuracies,” added Gary. **“There are data entry errors; there are time delays due to workflow and issues within departments, such as staff taking vacations and all other issues that may delay this process. Boston WorkStation doesn’t go on vacation. It is reliable every single day and is simply more efficient. We are very excited about all of the possible ways Boston WorkStation is helping our hospital to operate smoothly.”**

For more ideas on using Boston WorkStation in your facility, visit www.bostonworkstation.com or call 866 653 5105 directly.

