

Exceptional Living Centers

SUCCESS STORY

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- Rod Brewer,
Director of Information Systems,
Exceptional Living Centers



BACKGROUND: Change of ownership energized company growth

Voted one of Kentucky's Best Places to Work over multiple years, Ohio Valley-based Exceptional Living Centers (ELC) has an extensive professional management portfolio of not-for-profit Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living Centers, a Senior Independent Living Apartment Complex and a Continuing Care Retirement Community. When the company experienced a change of internal ownership, it energized their commitment to more proactive, responsive health care and enhanced their market growth initiatives.



CHALLENGE: Need for updated technology and enhanced support

One of the key departments to take the lead was Information Systems. Though small, the department managed stand-alone networks across all ELC's numerous physical locations. Maintaining acceptable uptimes was a time-consuming and daunting challenge. With the move to EHR on the horizon, it was obvious that ELC didn't have the bandwidth to make radical changes internally and wouldn't have the 24x7 IT support capabilities they needed to achieve their business goals.

SOLUTION: Quest for external technology provider led to full IT Outsourcing partnership with VCPI

In 2011, members of ELC's Senior Management Team initially wanted to talk about providing offsite Service Desk capabilities. "We were no longer able to respond quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively with only our internal IT resources," Rod Brewer, ELC's Director of Information Systems, explained to VCPI. "So we thought an outsourced call center was a logical place for us to start strengthening our IT environment."

However, during more in-depth discussions around ELC's anticipated and future needs and a site tour of their Data Center, Brewer quickly realized that partnering with VCPI for a total solution package was the direction in which ELC should head. "As Rod envisioned what would be required to achieve the strategic technology goals for ELC over the next 18 months, he recognized the depth of human and hardware resource investment ELC would need to make," said Tim Tarpey, VCPI Sales Manager. "Though he's an information systems expert, technology is not a core competency of ELC, nor should it be. Fortunately, it is for VCPI."

Added Brewer, "I was impressed with the level of experience of their management and senior level engineers," he noted. "I didn't feel pressured or confused by what they were offering. Their solid Midwestern values and easy rapport felt great, as though we were finding solutions together. Tapping into VCPI's experience was a great benefit to me as an IT professional."



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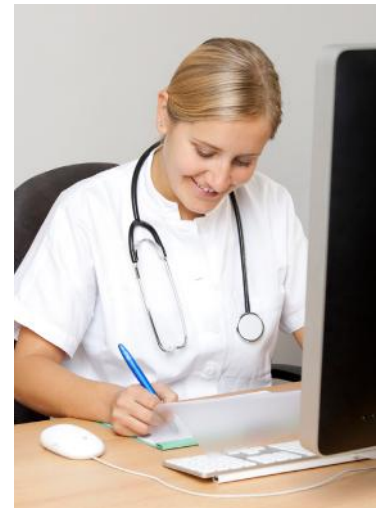
VCPI and ELC quickly developed a full IT outsourcing solution that included the initial Service Desk requirement, desktop endpoint management with thin clients (i.e., hardware devices that don't store or access data from their hard drive but, rather, from Internet-based servers), data centralization and more.

"I was excited by the fact that moving all our data and network capabilities into the VCPI environment and removing locally stored systems helped us to meet HIPAA, HITECH and other regulatory compliance directives," Brewer said. "Having a central location for data meant we could more effectively manage our current and future needs with a scalable model we could implement anywhere, within existing or new facilities. This was huge for us."

The On Boarding process went very well. "VCPI took the lead, allowing me to act as point person for our Administrators to filter and repackage questions, suggestions and concerns back to VCPI," Brewer stated.

VCPI Account Manager, Ellen Darling, credited a successful On Boarding to Brewer. "Because of Rod's experience and involvement," she said, "we were able to move more quickly, which allowed us to streamline the process. He was very engaged, from beginning to end."

The internal training segment, provided by VCPI, was relatively easy and adopted quickly. Noted Brewer, "We really didn't have any unexpected or significant issues. VCPI methodically configured all our systems to work within their environment. It was pretty obvious this was not their first rodeo."



RESULTS: ELC strategically stronger with valuable VCPI partnership

Since the partnership began, Brewer and ELC continue to see VCPI's value as the IT Outsourcing experts. "We immediately found value simply because we were able to securely house and remotely access our programs and data, more effectively meeting our goals," he said. "It was a good business decision then, and that investment decision has paid off in many different ways."

One of the more notable benefits for ELC has been the employees' ability to securely log in anywhere, using the virtualized environment that VCPI created through offsite data storage. "We've reduced the frustration level of having a laptop go down and not being able to access data," Brewer remarked. "Outsourcing to VCPI has enabled everyone to work much more efficiently on a shared network with excellent data security, including behind the scenes data backup, malware/virus protection, and network monitoring. And we can more accurately control the local desktop environment with role-based access that VCPI helped to establish and continues to support."

Brewer was also impressed with how easy and fast it is to provision new hardware to their specifications. "With thin client capabilities, VCPI's vendor can load an image to our devices before it's shipped to us, making it relatively 'plug and play.'"

VCPI and ELC are targeting Fall, 2014 for developing a mobile device management (MDM) protocol within their facilities, supported by wall kiosks and locked-down wireless thin client laptops attached to monitors. "Our goal is to have kiosks in each facility's wings and a mobile computer device on med carts that connects wirelessly to an enterprise-class wireless network that VCPI monitors," said Brewer.

The upcoming MDM project is also allowing VCPI to enhance its capabilities as it partners with ELC and vendors for additional equipment and software. "What ELC is looking to do is a shift from our Desktop Management team's usual process," Darling said. "We're researching exciting options and working hand in hand with Rod and the vendors so we can provide what ELC wants and allow employees to use devices as intended. Best of all, we'll be able to maintain HIPAA and HITECH compliance standards so that ELC's senior management will have peace of mind knowing their data is safe both within their facilities and VCPI's Data Center."

Brewer summarized ELC's relationship with VCPI as a sound financial decision for the company and a personal benefit to him. "Working with VCPI, I can now focus on providing proactive, long-term strategic direction for ELC's technology rather than spending my day on reactive IT operations and putting out fires," he said. "VCPI has proven that they truly are my partner."

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