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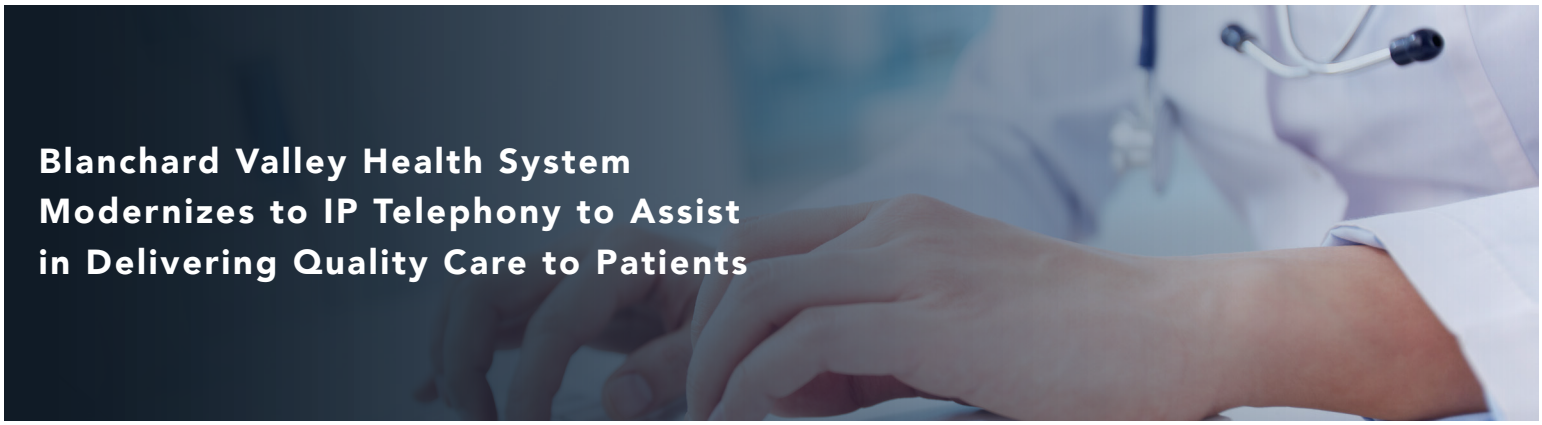

Blanchard Valley Health System Modernizes to IP Telephony to Assist in Delivering Quality Care to Patients

Blanchard Valley Health System (BVHS) has more than 100 years of experience serving the people of northwestern Ohio. Based in Findlay, BVHS is a non-profit regional health system that has experienced substantial renovations and expansions over the course of its history. Today, it consists primarily of two hospitals—one with 150 beds, the other with 60 - and one assisted living facility that serves as many as 300 residents. In addition, BVHS has several small campuses for outpatient clinics, research facilities, urgent care facilities and various other offices. In total, the health system is comprised of approximately 25 locations.

Challenge: In the healthcare industry, work can be a matter of life and death, and communication is of the utmost importance. When Jeff Kelley, the Telecommunications System Administrator for BVHS joined the team three years ago, one of the problems he encountered was that the hospital hadn't upgraded any software or firmware in the switches that powered the communications network. Shortly thereafter, BVHS was made aware that the phones and infrastructure they were using had reached end-of-life and the company would no longer be offering support for them.

After about 10 or 11 years of not upgrading the infrastructure, BVHS had no other choice. The health system needed communications infrastructure upon which it could rely because of the serious nature of its business mission: caring for its patients across the entire span of their lives. BVHS needed a cost-effective, dependable solution for its 2,000 phones spread across 25 geographically disparate campuses, and it needed redundancy and resiliency to ensure open lines of communication in case certain networks were ever knocked offline.

Having had the same phone infrastructure in place for about a decade, BVHS began to weigh its options and started by looking at the equipment it already had in place in order to decide what, if anything, could be salvaged. What the health system had on hand dated back to 2002. After analyzing the demands of end users, who wanted IP telephony and other unified communication features, the organizations decided to go with new equipment. The old phones simply didn't have the desired capabilities.

After comparing solutions from several other vendors, Kelley was ultimately attracted to a Mitel offering through BSB Communications because of the versatility that the solution provided. The pair also provided BVHS with tons of research on various offerings that the health system could peruse to determine what worked best for them.

"Cost was important. I wasn't pinned down to a specific brand", Kelley says. "Mitel gave us the flexibility to use third-party equipment, whereas [the other brands] forced you to buy proprietary equipment." Because of the spread-out nature of BVHS' 25 locations, the health system needed a vendor that could offer a high level of customer support. Kelley explains "there were few vendors willing to drive four hours to offer support at a distant site. However, BSB Communications was willing to provide the kind of service that BVHS needed."

Due to the health system's desire for redundancy and resiliency, BSB Communications suggested solutions from NVT Phybridge, a manufacturer of switches that deliver Ethernet and Power over a single pair of wire with four times the reach capabilities of traditional switches.

"In the event of failure, I need to know how we could keep our systems alive", Kelley says. "That's when they presented the NVT Phybridge solution."

Such switches give organizations the ability to easily modernize to an IP telephony solution while leveraging the existing and reliable communications infrastructure. In addition, the solutions provide an extra layer of redundancy, as voice and data lines can be kept separate. If the data network were to fail, voice applications would remain online - something very attractive to a healthcare provider.

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Solution: Kelley decided to go with the BSB Communication offering of Mitel phones and NVT Phybridge switches. "NVT Phybridge was essential for our disaster recovery plan", Kelley explains. "If we were to lose a certain portion of network connectivity, how do we maintain our telephones? NVT Phybridge fit the bill for that. We have designated all those phones in the hospital with a red handset cord, so employees know those phones will remain operational in the event of a core network failure."

The entire digital transformation took six just months, a time period Kelley says was "very reasonable". The modernization was done floor-by-floor on a department-by-department basis. After finishing a section of the project, Kelley and his team reached out to end users to ensure the system was operating smoothly. It always was!

"When we actually began to deploy, it was pretty seamless", Kelley says. "The departments were unaware of the transition as it didn't interfere with their operations."

Result: Kelley and the team were extremely pleased with the quality of service. "I've maybe had a problem with 20 of the phones, and half of those were because of end-user issues, like someone spilled a drink on one", Kelley explains. "The system just works, and thank to NVT Phybridge, we've got failover in place that keeps us alive at all times."

The NVT Phybridge solution also resulted in substantial cost savings for BVHS. Kelley estimates that NVT Phybridge reduced infrastructure costs by 50%.

"I have some [phones] deployed well over 2,000 feet away that are working just fine," Kelley says. BVHS was, and continues to be very pleased with technology partners, NVT Phybridge and BSB Communications.

"The end users are absolutely satisfied with the new communication capabilities", Kelley says. "The solution provided a lot of flexibility for them as far as things they couldn't do before. With the new features [like unified communications], you can do about anything you would want to do."

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