



Wellmont Health System

Managing documents across multiple sites

Thirteen hospitals, 6,000 health care professionals, and tens of thousands of documents to keep track of on an annual basis. Managing such an enormous flow of information would present a challenge to any organization. But before the contracts and accounts payable departments at Wellmont Health System switched over to a document management solution using docSTAR, the task seemed insurmountable.

Formed in 1996, the Wellmont system now includes more than 1,400 licensed beds and nearly 1,000 physicians serving patients in the tri-state region of Northeast Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, and Southeast Kentucky. As the premier provider of healthcare service grew, so, too, did the demands for back-office support.

An already cramped accounts payable department filled up with about 20 filing cabinets, all of which were stuffed with hard copies of checks and invoices from the previous year. The staff members responsible for monitoring contracts for the entire system found themselves swarmed in paperwork.

According to Erin Arnold, contracts analyst for the hospital network, the situation was causing frustration for her personnel – and that frustration eventually spiraled out to other areas of the organization.

“Contracts were scattered all over the place and couldn’t be found,” she said. “They weren’t being updated and we didn’t always know which department they belonged to.”

Given the number of contracts – Arnold said her small staff is responsible for thousands each year – and the multiple departments involved, the process of routing so many different documents using the existing system was becoming unmanageable.

Document management changes everything

With the help of docSTAR, Wellmont Health System scanned its contracts into digital format for easy management and instant retrieval. Efficiency soared and because the agreements were now filed in a central location and coded by specific categories, the organization’s bottom line was positively affected as expiring contracts were flagged for review in a timely manner.

“Before docSTAR, we didn’t have a filing system to locate past, present, and future contracts that were expiring,” Arnold explained. “Now we have a cost-effective way to do that because the expiration and notice dates are identified on all contracts.”

“The reports are easy to access and the contracts are tracked much more effectively,” she added. “We know exactly when contracts are up for renewal and that gives us a heads-up on supply cost

increases. It also allows us time to negotiate better pricing in advance.”

The advent of such a high level of control over document management has streamlined operations for Wellmont Health, improving communication between virtually all areas that interact with the people in charge of the contracts.

“This is a very large health system and we have several thousand documents loaded into docSTAR,” Arnold stated. “They come from purchasing, cardiology, radiology, pharmacy, materials management...everything. This solution has worked extremely well for us.”

Enter accounts payable

The improvements in contract management weren’t lost on Wellmont’s accounts payable department, which also has converted to the document management solution.

“We have 13 hospitals in the system and we pay all of their bills – that’s about 1,000 checks and pages of documentation every week,” said Traci Smith, accounts payable supervisor for Wellmont Health System. “We had been filing hard copies of everything in file cabinets that were taking up a lot of room in our little area. Now we scan all of our documents into docSTAR and it’s a very streamlined procedure.”

The learning curve was short, according to Smith, and the benefits were almost immediate.

“The software is really self-explanatory once you get into it,” she noted. “Now all the documents are so easy to retrieve that we’re more efficient with our time.”

The accounts payable team has shared the ease of retrieval with other parts of the Wellmont system, giving them viewing rights for documents related to their respective departments. In the past, the staff in AP would have to field non-stop requests to find hard copies; which required them to drop whatever they might be doing at the moment, locate the right cabinet, and then hope the document had been filed in the correct drawer in the first place.

“With the viewing rights we’ve given them in docSTAR, the other departments can go in themselves and find what they need right away,” Smith said. “We’ve actually eliminated all of our cabinetry, which opened up enough office space for us to add another, much-needed person to the department.”

From easy digital storage to instant retrieval, e-mail routing and even electronic signature capability for final document approval, docSTAR has taken what started out as a huge mountain of paperwork and turned it into a seamless flow of business support and communication for Wellmont Health System.

“Making the move to docSTAR has benefited us greatly,” Erin Arnold said. “It has had a positive impact on our relationship with all the other departments.”