

Cleveland Clinic Mercy Hospital

Case Study

At a glance


Key Metric

Mercy Hospital reduced its operator training time from one month to one day.



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CHALLENGES



1

Simplify the physician consult process and reduce the number of operator errors.

2

Reduce call times and operator training time.

SOLUTIONS



- Automatically pull physician contact preferences based on the time of day and day of the week when handling consult calls.
- Build call handling flows directly into the scripts to reduce training time.

CUSTOMER QUOTE



"As soon as we started using scripts, call time was shorter, errors were fewer, and training was better. It was just all around more efficient."

Carolyn Sonnefeld

Systems Analyst II for Mercy Hospital

Using Scripting to Increase Efficiency, Reduce Errors, and Reduce Training Time for Operators

Cleveland Clinic Mercy Hospital, previously known as Mercy Medical Center, became part of the Cleveland Clinic health system in 2021. Mercy Hospital operates a 476-bed hospital in Canton, Ohio, and several outpatient locations in Alliance, Carroll County, Jackson Township, Lake Township, Louisville, Massillon, North Canton, Plain Township, and Tuscarawas County. Mercy Hospital employs 620 medical staff members, plus an additional 2,800 caregivers. Mercy Hospital is a Catholic hospital that continues the mission and philosophy of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, and it prides itself on being dedicated to excellence and healing.

A Busy Call Center Has a Major Update

Mercy Hospital's call center typically answers almost 90,000 calls each month. They handle a wide variety of requests from callers, including calls for patients and hospital employees, answering service calls for physicians, code calls, alarm calls, prescription refills, remote receptionist, appointments, and scheduling.

When the hospital upgraded its call center system to Amtelco's platform, the new software gave them innovative scripting capabilities, allowing them to script various calls to their call center. The platform also significantly enhanced their organization's directories, on-call scheduling, and reporting capabilities. After upgrading, the major advantages were "fewer errors, happier physicians, and being better able to accommodate physicians and their busy lives," according to Systems Analyst II, Carolyn Sonnefeld.

Significant Training Improvements

One of the most significant benefits scripting brings to Mercy Hospital is the reduced training time for operators. Before scripting, training a new operator involved explaining how each type of call needed to be handled and any special requirements for some of the physicians. This process could take up to a month for new operators to become familiar with all the details.

Now, Carolyn builds that type of information directly into the scripts, which has reduced training time for a new operator to about one day. Carolyn said, "Now we can pretty much pull anyone in, sit them down, and off they go."



Custom Scripting Streamlines Call Handling

Carolyn uses script templates to speed the process of building scripts and setting up new physician accounts. "It took about a month to do some basic work, with a few tricks here and there. I feel confident saying there wasn't a whole lot I couldn't handle after only a couple of months," stated Carolyn.

Carolyn said, "As soon as we started using scripts, call time was shorter, errors were fewer, and training was better. It was just all around more efficient." The primary reason scripting reduces errors and speeds call processing is that scripting does all the work in the background. The scripts automatically determine how to contact the physician based on the current day and time. "They don't have to think outside of the box. It makes calls faster, and it improves efficiency. There are fewer errors this way, and everything is done right there for you. You follow your screen – top to bottom, left to right," stated Carolyn.

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Physicians will say, 'You can do that?!' People are amazed at our technology and what we can do. Never once have I told someone I can't do that – because I actually can."

Simplified and Unified Communication Keeps Physicians Happy

When working with new physicians, Carolyn collects their basic office information and contact information and asks how they want their calls handled on weekdays, nights, and weekends. New physicians often challenge her, asking if the call center can provide particular services. "They'll say, 'You can do that?!' People are amazed at our technology and what we can do." She continued, "Never once have I told someone I can't do that – because I actually can."

Prior to using scripting, consults were the most challenging type of call for Mercy Hospital's call center. According to Carolyn, "Every doctor has their own way they want consult calls handled." Now that they are using scripting, "We get all of the necessary information from the caller, such as where the patient is, and what the consult is for. Then the system automatically pulls in the doctor's contact preferences based on the time of day and day of the week. It knows who we're sending it to, where we're sending it (to their home phone, cell phone, or pager). Before scripting, that was a little bit of a bear. There were lots of errors."



“
Using reports, I can tell what happens with calls – if there is an operator error or if someone hung up, etc. I feel like Inspector Gadget! It’s really great. I love it.”

When a physician – or multiple physicians – needs to be contacted, scripting also simplifies that process. "All the work is done behind the scenes, with the advantage of, for each, we page out several groups as well as individuals. So, it's one button that does all the work. And then in the background, we're getting all of these people contacted, all at the same time," said Carolyn.

The platform is also integrated into Mercy Hospital's HL7 patient information database. "We can pull in information based on which hospital it is, and that eliminates spelling errors, date of birth errors – things like that. It speeds up the call time, pulls in all that information very quickly, and then as soon as we select the 'Next' button, the script handles the rest," said Carolyn.

Continuous Quality Improvement with Special Scripts and Reporting

Ensuring everything is current and updated can be a challenge for any organization. To expedite this, Mercy Hospital has a unique script for this purpose. "We created a script within our department for operators to help report things, give ideas, and report things that need to be changed or updated. It's all very neat in one account, and I don't have to go anywhere else for that information. The operators really like that," stated Carolyn.

Determining what happened on a particular call is very easy. "I use a lot of the reports, trying to investigate calls. I would say that's a huge perk now. Using reports, I can tell what happens with calls – if there is an operator error or if someone hung up, etc. I feel like Inspector Gadget! It's really great. I love it." said Carolyn.

Advice to Others


When talking to others about upgrading to Amtelco, Carolyn typically asks them what their most challenging type of call is and then tells them how scripting can help make those calls so much easier. “The biggest thing is that nothing is impossible,” Carolyn said. “It looks better, it’s cleaner, it’s neater, it’s just very nice all around.”


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