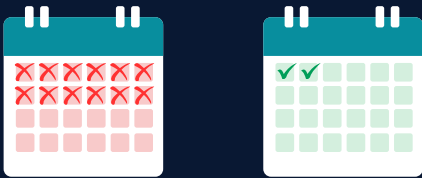# Piedmont Healthcare

Case Study

At a glance

Key Metric

Piedmont Healthcare's operator training time for answering general calls was reduced from 1-2 weeks to 2-3 days.

amtelco

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CHALLENGES ⌄

1 Avoid call center downtime, and reduce the time it takes to troubleshoot system issues.

2 Find a way to work with the health system's policy that prohibits the IT department from maintaining third-party equipment.

SOLUTIONS ⌄

- Upgrade to a cloud-based call center to identify and quickly resolve issues to avoid downtime.
- Shift the call center's system maintenance responsibility to the hosted service provider.

CUSTOMER QUOTE ⌄

"Amtelco monitors the system, and they can identify and resolve issues before we even notice them. Now I'm only responsible for a VPN tunnel... IT was very much in agreement with our decision because no one here has to touch (the equipment), and it doesn't have to live in our system or data center."

Jeremy Williams
Manager of the Call Operations Center for Piedmont Healthcare

Averting Downtime with a Hosted Contact Center Solution

Piedmont Healthcare was founded as Piedmont Hospital by Drs. Ludwig Amster and Floyd Willcox McRae in 1905. Today, the nonprofit system is the largest Georgia-based employer in the state and employs more than 44,000 people who provide care for 3.7 million patients.

The organization has an astounding number of physical locations, including 23 hospitals, 72 Piedmont Urgent Care centers, 25 QuickCare locations, 1,875 Piedmont Clinic physician practices, and 3,200 Piedmont Clinic members. Between 2018-2023, Piedmont provided $1.4 billion in uncompensated care and community benefit programming to the communities it serves.

Piedmont Healthcare was recognized twice by Newsweek in 2023 as one of America's Greatest Workplaces for Diversity and one of America's Greatest Workplaces for Women. Forbes ranked Piedmont Healthcare on its list of the Best Large Employers in the United States in 2022.

Upgrading from an On-Premise Solution to a Hosted Environment

The decision to upgrade to a cloud-based call center was made when Piedmont Healthcare experienced a significant service outage after their call center system in Athens, Georgia, went down. "We couldn't answer calls, and our IT people were prohibited from working on our servers because they weren't the property of our healthcare system," said Jeremy Williams, Manager of the Call Operations Center for Piedmont Healthcare.

"A regular answering service will have its own IT department and programmers. So, the employees can troubleshoot and resolve issues when they arise," continued Jeremy. "However, it's different in a healthcare environment. Our IT staff have the knowledge and desire to help, but our organization's policies and procedures will not allow them to touch a third-party piece of equipment because of liability concerns."

When the problem was resolved, it was clear that the healthcare system needed another solution. There were too many limitations with Piedmont Healthcare's on-premise equipment. Jeremy reached out to Amtelco and learned that a hosted environment removed the maintenance responsibilities from their organization.
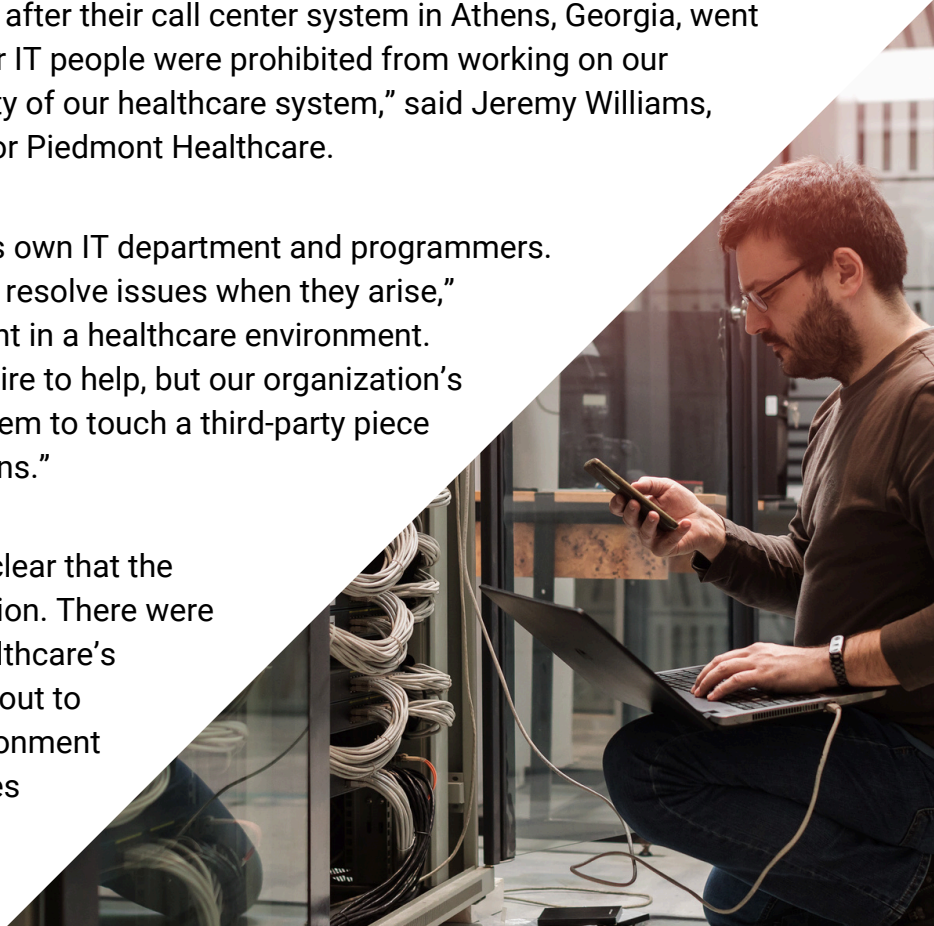
"Amtelco monitors the system, and they can identify and resolve issues before we even notice them," stated Jeremy. "Now I'm only responsible for a VPN (virtual private network) tunnel that connects our system to Amazon's Cloud and the computers that use it. IT was very much in agreement with our decision because no one here has to touch it, and it doesn't have to live in our system or data center."

Another immediate benefit Jeremy experienced was the ease of use of the new system, which reduced operator training time. He said, "I've noticed the training time for my brand-new agents has reduced significantly. I usually have them answering general calls within 2-3 days versus the 1-2 weeks it used to take."

Jeremy is planning to use the new cloud-based technology for future redundancy needs. He said, "Using the cloud is just so much easier. We won't have to have multiple servers in multiple areas. We can just have one VPN at a data center, and another at a different data center and link them together."

Overcoming Initial Concerns from the IT Department

According to Statista, downtime caused by ransomware attacks on healthcare systems in the United States cost an estimated $14.7 billion from January to October 2023. In 2022, it cost the healthcare sector around $16 billion.

With that in mind, it's understandable Jeremy feels the biggest challenge he faced was getting buy-in and approvals from Piedmont Healthcare's IT department. "Our IT department is extremely particular, and they have to be. They are concerned about what information is going over the internet, hackers, targeting, ransomware, etc.," said Jeremy. "Fortunately, I had an experienced internal project manager. There were still hurdles: the TSQ's (Technical Security Questionnaires), Information Security Reviews, and product reviews. There was a lot of going back and forth and documentation, but she was incredibly successful at navigating the waters for us."

"Amtelco worked well with us and got us everything we needed within

our time frame," continued Jeremy. "Amtelco was very responsive when our IT department needed something and would jump on calls and answer questions. It was a collaborative effort."

The Importance of Business Partnerships

Healthcare organizations need dependable technology partners. A vendor that provides solutions should understand that the relationship with their customers is more of a business partnership.

Jeremy didn't have experience in a call center environment when he was transitioning into his current role. He said, "I worked on an ambulance as a paramedic for 20 years, and also was a security officer for the hospital for 21 years. During the changeover, I was working part-time in the telecom department and still doing a lot of my administrative roles in public safety."

> "Once you purchase from Amtelco, you have an entire organization of owners and users willing to help, provide training, give you 24/7 access to programmers, and present frequent webinars. In general, it is easy to reach out to somebody to get support as needed."

While he was shifting roles, Jeremy attended Amtelco's Healthcare Conference and realized he had dozens of people he could turn to for guidance. "Being able to not only reach out to my sales representative, Amtelco's Contracted Services, and Amtelco's support but also be able to ask questions of my peers was something I didn't know existed," said Jeremy.

Amtelco's Service Department personnel have an average tenure of 17 years with the company. The relationships customers and staff build over the years foster true business partnerships. Amtelco's first contact resolution (FCR) rate is 90%. This means 90% of customers who call with an issue have it resolved by Amtelco's service department before they hang up the phone.

Jeremy continues, "Once you purchase from Amtelco, you have an entire organization of owners and users willing to help, provide training, give you 24/7 access to programmers, and present frequent webinars. In general, it is easy to reach out to somebody to get support as needed."

Automation and Consolidation

Future plans include integrating QGenda schedules into Amtelco's on-call schedule system, automating standard announcements, and using speech recognition to replace their phone tree. Jeremy commented, "There were a lot of good possibilities for automation shared at the recent National Amtelco Equipment Owners (NAEO) conference, and I learned how APIs connect with Amtelco's integration engine (MergeComm)."

Jeremy is anticipating using the automated call scoring abilities of Amtelco's newest offering, Active Insights. Active Insights is a native cloud-specific development that harnesses the power of the data collected by call centers and turns that information into actionable insights. "We run metrics and look at KPIs to see how my operators are running, and that's why I'm really looking forward to using Active Insights," said Jeremy. "Right now, we only have ten calls graded per year, and I'm expecting to have many more calls graded to get a better understanding of where we actually are."

He continued, "I am currently researching what it would take to move all the Piedmont PBX functions to Amtelco's environment to create a standardized singular platform versus our current situation which has PBX agents scattered over many different departments with varied responsibilities. The opportunities to better align our services is exciting."

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