> # "We needed someone to bring our network and people up to a level that they could maintain."

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Lancaster General Health

Client success story

The Company

Lancaster General Health is a regional not-for-profit healthcare system with a reputation for excellence. The winner of numerous national and local awards, Lancaster General Health's mission is to advance the health and well-being of the communities it serves.

LGH has been recognized regionally and nationally for its Cardiology, Intensive Care Unit and Orthopedic services. Other key specialty services include Open-Heart Surgery, Obstetrics Neurosurgery, Trauma, Pediatric Care and inpatient and outpatient Behavioral Health. As a member of the Penn Cancer Network, LG Health has access to the vast research and technological resources of one of the nation's foremost cancer centers.

The Challenge

"We were growing at a remarkable pace; our organization had almost doubled in less than a decade," says Gary Davidson, Chief Information Officer and Senior Vice President at Lancaster General Health (LGH). "Our complexities had changed, but our IT organization had not; individual departments were doing their own thing, and had been doing it that way since the 1990s. We didn't have a strategic structure, nor were we really sure how to get there."

As CIO, Davidson needed to modernize Lancaster General's IT infrastructure so that the various parts of the organization would be able to communicate seamlessly with each other. This was especially important, given the emerging focus on Accountable Care, the Affordable Care Act, and a myriad of other government and payer regulations, such as HIPAA. "These rules meant we had to change and evolve about 75 percent of our system. We needed more complex IT structures, and our systems needed to change to meet those changes."

Davidson knew he needed to implement a centralized network in order to be able to handle what he called "the substantial strain," as well as to maintain a solid level of management. No part of the existing network was safe from the overhaul; there were no "sacred cows," as he put it. The hospital system's servers, network, and even its storage infrastructure were scheduled for a major upgrade across two major data centers, as was the move to high availability, to ensure that the network would be functioning every hour of every day. It wasn't just the hardware and software that needed improvement; Lancaster General also needed to hire an additional 50 people as part of its IT retooling.

"We needed someone to bring our network and people up to a level that they could maintain our infrastructure going forward," Davidson says. And all of that was decided before the afternoon that the hospital's existing infrastructure crashed.

The Solution: VertitechIT

VertitechIT's experts had been called in to Lancaster General to review the telecom system. "They were here when my network crashed. The entire infrastructure crashed," Davidson says. VertitechIT's team immediately shifted into troubleshooting mode, and was able to rapidly figure out the source of the problem, and get the network back up and running. "When you have a network of our size that

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crashes, and we didn't know why…they were able to quickly isolate the problem, and helped us bring the network back safely and restore it."

The crash, he says, occurred even though a previous consultant had reviewed the system and reported that it was in relatively good shape. "They understated its condition. They should have said we had a potential problem, and said, Don't sit on this…move now. This is urgent, this is a time bomb waiting to explode."

So, Davidson asked VertitechIT to review the health system's entire expansion plan. He wanted to know if Lancaster General could implement the upgraded network with a high degree of safety, stability and reliability. "Failure wasn't an option," he says. "We already had more than half of the project installed with a 'go-live' scheduled in less than 90 days. If we had to delay it, that would cost of us millions of dollars."

VertitechIT came in with specific, solid recommendations. In some cases, it suggested that Davidson and his team change vendors, since their existing equipment would have been incapable of handling the increased data traffic; "it could have been a land mine," he says. VertitechIT helped Lancaster General implement the revised infrastructure, and has continued on, helping the organization implement cloud and other technologies; all of them improving LGH's system to industry-standard levels.

The Future

"We need to maintain currency on where the industry is going, and we now have that. We don't want to lose that again," Davidson says. "It's one of the things I like about VertitechIT; they've seen not only our site, but other sites across many industries, and they've seen how technologies have been implemented elsewhere for maximum value. They're very knowledgeable about technology, and stay close to where the industry is headed, so that we can leverage it to bring in new things to stay at the proven edge."

With VertitechIT's help, Davidson is now implementing a private cloud at Lancaster General; "for a healthcare organization, we're pretty leading-edge," he notes. Davidson adds that he will continue to work with VertitechIT since it is willing to bring proven capabilities from other industries to bear in his organization.

"VertitechIT has helped us maximize the return on our investment, and the bottom line is that we will be much further ahead than where we've been…both in technology, and providing the kind of services our healthcare professionals and patients expect."