



NHS Service Management is in Good Health

How IT departments in the National Health System (NHS) are using Numara FootPrints to provide superior service management support

The NHS relies on its IT department to provide exceptional service and support to staff and patients. Because the NHS is the only public health system in the UK, it is vital that despite a cut in funding, an increasing population, human resource issues, and growing public scrutiny, the NHS can deliver outstanding service and support to those who need it. More importantly lives may depend on this.

NHS organisations including Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust are showing how they can deliver that support to staff and patients through its Numara® FootPrints® flexible service desk solution.

Introduction

The National Health Service (NHS) aims to provide good healthcare to all in the UK, regardless of wealth. It prides itself on providing a comprehensive range of services, devoting all public funds for healthcare solely to NHS patients, working with others to ensure a seamless service to patients and respecting the confidentiality of individual patients.

So in order to ensure all of these principles are met, the NHS needs to provide a superior service management system which extends beyond the basics of 'service management'. This means delivering a service desk solution for staff and patients that not only allows them to log their IT requests, and manages and resolves these in an efficient manner, but also a solution that can work easily with existing NHS IT tools.

Real budget cuts

The NHS has grown to become the world's largest publicly funded health service. It is funded centrally from national taxation. The 2009-2010 budget roughly equates to a contribution of nearly £2,000 for every man, woman and child in the UK.

IN BRIEF

Industry

Health (NHS) – Public Sector

Industry Issues

- Reduced Government funding and budget cuts
- An increasing and ageing population in the UK places more pressure on the NHS to deliver quality health service and support
- Staffing shortages and human resource issues
- Public scrutiny over spending and the increasing focus of regulation and compliance especially around ICT

IT Issues in the Health Sector

- Real budget cuts potentially on the horizon, accentuated by a new and uncertain political climate
- Requests to improve processes and increase efficiencies
- Increasing demand for more automated services and processes
- Compliance, regulation and IT best practice (ITIL)

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Liz Wells

IT Operations Manager
Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

In March 2010, the Government announced a cut of £4.35bn to the NHS budget. Reduced Government funding, meant internal budget cuts, including reductions to IT budgets. The NHS is therefore under pressure, to deliver more value, but with less resources. And, in the midst of the new Government, spending within the Department of Public Health and the NHS is uncertain.

And this is where NHS Trusts such as the Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has seen the value in service desk solutions, such as Numara FootPrints, that can be implemented quickly and at a cost-effective price and allow the Trust to automate a number of critical processes.

Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust receives more than 3,000 service calls per month, ranging from serious issues regarding the urgent servicing of clinical equipment to more trivial problems such as resetting of passwords. Prior to implementing Numara FootPrints, the Trust was using a service desk solution to support their 2,500 users spread over 30 sites, covering 1,500 PCs and laptops. However users had lost confidence in the system and a new solution was long overdue. IT Operations Manager at Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Liz Wells, commented, "Our service desk system was an in-house Access-based system that was very old and lacked functionality. We were getting no managerial benefits from using it, such as useful statistics or reports. There was no effective user-interface, which made it difficult to log calls. Our technicians were using it, but didn't like doing so.

"That meant we had a series of stick-up notes appear all over the place, which we tried to ban because we were fed up of seeing lots of scrawl and it was a totally inefficient and ineffective way of running our service and support. With the old system, for the time being, we could manage our workflow, but that was about all. We had wanted a proper system for several years, but getting the funding was always the issue. Numara FootPrints also represented a substantial huge cost advantage for us."

Requests to improve processes and improve efficiency

Improving processes and minimising errors is a key principle for the NHS, particularly when it comes to IT. IT departments are under increasing pressure to deliver more support and services, and for public services such as the NHS, service desks must be implemented quickly, be more than simply a portal for managing incoming support requests, and must also resolve issues in a timely manner too. Like many Trusts, a service desk is at the heart of a hospital, dealing with technical problems which may impact clinical care if they are not sorted out quickly and without fuss.

For example, Dorset Healthcare made an ambitious decision to implement Numara FootPrints in February 2009 within a two month timeframe to ensure it fit in with the end of the 2008-2009 financial year. Wells added, "Numara FootPrints helpfully provides you with various different templates and wizards and the more carefully you fill these in, the easier the implementation becomes. Our consultant was excellent and Numara® Software helped get us up to speed by delivering excellent training. We had a close relationship and great chemistry with the Numara Software team. Now, a year down the line, it's been a real success story for us."

Increasing service efficiency is paramount when it comes to service desk solutions and Dorset HealthCare has seen a dramatic difference in the number of calls made to the service desk.

"After implementing the product, in just three weeks, the number of phone calls to the support desk decreased," says Wells. "We were getting over 3000 calls a month. Sometimes it seemed as if they were even calling us when their kettle wasn't working. Now, if they email the support desk, a ticket is created in Numara FootPrints, which is seamless as far as we're concerned, and the user gets an email with the details.

"Our goal was to improve communications and to cut down unnecessary phone calls, and we are already achieving that because the number of emails in and out of the system is increasing greatly. We've seen a reduction in costs over the past year of at least 25 percent, plus huge efficiency gains, this is all thanks to Numara FootPrints."

Compliance, regulation and IT best practice

With the NHS being publicly funded, managers are constantly under scrutiny when it comes to annual Government budgetary reporting, regulation and compliance, particularly when it comes to compliance in the IT department. This means that having strong policies and best practice IT systems in place allows the NHS to deliver on its principles more effectively.

ITIL® (the Information Technology Infrastructure Library®) provides a framework and guidelines on the best practice to use to deliver IT services, outlining an extensive set of management procedures that are intended to support businesses in achieving both quality and value in IT operations. This is where Numara FootPrints with its ITIL v3 verification has helped Dorset Healthcare ensure it meets ITIL best practice standards and delivers an effective and efficient service desk.

Wells added, "We needed the solution to be ITIL-friendly because the system needs to be able to link with the central service desk for the NHS which relies on ITIL best practices. We also needed scalability and ease of development when we want it, and something that is simple for both technicians and end-users to adopt. They are using it throughout the day, so it needs to look clean and has to flow in a logical way. Supporting our workflow is important. If it's a headache to use, we go back to square one. With all those criteria in mind, and sitting well within our costings, it was an easy choice to implement Numara FootPrints.

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Numara Software – helping health in service management

Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is an excellent example of NHS Trusts that are providing superior IT service management through their use of the Numara FootPrints flexible service desk solution. Numara Software has a history of providing its solutions to many other NHS Trusts and health departments in the public sector.

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust has been using Numara Software solutions since 2003 and has improved its help desk processes especially during critical times. Hinchingsbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust has had a long-standing relationship with Numara Software and has particularly benefited from their Inventory and asset management capabilities. Numara Software solutions have also helped other health care providers such as West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) which delivers the automation, reliability and flexibility that WMAS depends on and enables it to continue to deliver life critical service with confidence as the organisation has expanded.

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Who are we?

Numara Software is a leading provider of integrated IT management solutions for Desktop Management, PC Lifecycle Management, Security & Compliance, Help Desk and Service Desk. Designed to optimize IT management, Numara FootPrints and Numara Track-It! collectively support more than 50,000 customer sites and nearly 20 million IT assets worldwide.



freedom
to simply choose
the right solution for you