

CASE STUDY: SATILLA REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Waycross, Georgia

Beyond Paper and Pencil

"One of the difficulties with our paper-based environment was that when nurse managers or schedulers wanted to make changes, they had to go to a certain office to get the schedule," recalls Barry Rudd, director of information technology at Satilla Regional Medical Center in Waycross, Georgia.

This was just one of the challenges of paper-based labor resource management at Satilla. The Human Resources department faced its own obstacles. In the case of payroll, outdated technology made it difficult to efficiently track hours logged by employees. This system was accessible only on two workstations, and the staff was constantly improvising to gather the information needed.

Rudd and his colleagues took note of these limitations, and the 247-bed health system identified two, intertwined objectives. The first was to automate scheduling for its 1,200 employees, transitioning away from pencils and paper. On the payroll side, Satilla decided to upgrade to a time and attendance system that would enhance workflow for payroll staff.

An Integrated Solution

To guide the initiative, Satilla formed a committee, which represented the nursing, human resources, finance and information technology departments. Wanting to make the most of its investment, the committee identified integration as the key selection criterion.

"Rather than separate applications from different vendors, we saw the benefit of an integrated solution," explains Rudd. "With the applications sharing a common database, we could provide our managers with more useful features, like Web-based access from anywhere and real-time views of their information."

In June 2005, Satilla chose to implement the Payrollmation® system for time and attendance and the ActiveStaffer® system for staffing and scheduling, both from API Healthcare.

Another factor in Satilla's decision, according to Rudd, was API Healthcare's specialization: "We felt their focus on healthcare would benefit us, and we were right. Unlike a more general company or consultant, they fully understand what it takes to staff nursing 24-7."



Satilla Regional Medical Center,
Waycross, Georgia

AT A GLANCE

Problem: Paper-based processes limit staff access to scheduling and time & attendance information

Solution: Automate staffing & scheduling and time & attendance tracking with systems that share a common database

Results: Improved scheduling helps control labor costs; payroll staff saves one day of work per pay period

"Rather than separate applications from different vendors, we saw the benefit of an integrated solution."

Barry Rudd,
Director of Information Technology
at Satilla Regional Medical Center





"One of the things we've appreciated about the integration is the ability to see when employees are going into an overtime situation."

Barry Rudd,
Director of Information Technology

With the ActiveStaffer system in place, Satilla empowered its managers to be more proactive.

"One of the things we've appreciated about the integration is the ability to see when employees are going into an overtime situation," says Rudd. With this capability, Satilla can optimize the use of its internal staff resources and minimize labor costs.

Ease of deployment

Implementation and ongoing maintenance are simplified because both applications are Internet-based. Rudd cites API Healthcare's software design as another benefit. "We really appreciate that API Healthcare uses so much 'off-the-shelf' technology, like SQL Server and the Microsoft® .NET Framework," he explains. "Compared to some of the closed systems that require more specific training, the use of this technology allows me to hire someone off the street who can walk in and quickly understand how API Healthcare works."

Rudd also reports a positive working relationship with API Healthcare service and support. "Usually within minutes, and never more than a day later, we get a response outlining how we're going to deal with our requested change or issue," explains Rudd.

Both API Healthcare applications went live in March 2006. Today, the Payrollmation system is being used at all facilities, and the ActiveStaffer system is being used at the hospital, with future plans to expand to all locations.

Information is Power

"The employees really like the Payrollmation system because they can login through the portal to access their information, such as total hours for the week or accumulated PTO," says Rudd. "The nursing staff reports that the ActiveStaffer system has made their jobs much easier because it provides information that wasn't available with paper-based scheduling." Employees have also found it easier to trade shifts and secure manager approval.

For managers, Rudd explains that "information is power." In this case, it's the power to control labor costs. Managers have access to all the details they need — employees' time, schedules, PTO, vacation, FMLA and so forth — to see holes in their schedules days or weeks in advance. "Since these systems are Web-based, all of this information is at their fingertips from anywhere in the organization," he says.

For their part, the payroll staff estimates that the Payrollmation system saves them a full day of work with every pay period.

With the ActiveStaffer system, Satilla successfully made the transition from paper-and-pencil processes to the advantages of automation in just a few short months. Rudd reports that nurse managers delivered a clear and succinct verdict one year after implementation: "We don't know what we would do without it!"



Experts in optimizing human capital