Prescription for Service Desk Efficiency

Ardent Health Services selected CereCore to manage their Level 1 Help Desk, a collaborative effort that enabled Ardent to expand its capability to address key strategic initiatives.

The Client
Ardent Health Services

The Facility
+ 30+ Hospitals in 7 States
+ 4,200+ Licensed Beds

Results
+ Gained a scalable workforce to respond to support requests quickly and efficiently.
+ Gained visibility to key performance metrics - including high volume incidents that could be resolved permanently.
+ Dramatically improved physician and patient satisfaction through queue manipulation and prioritization strategies.
+ Achieved financial and efficiency value by finding the balance between speed to answer and help desk staffing.
+ Achieved overall incident reduction through addressing high-volume issues that could be fixed.
+ Gave Ardent flexibility during large Epic activations and support to patients using Epic MyChart.

Video
How We Help Ardent Health

THE CHALLENGE

Ardent Health Services supports 4,200+ beds, 1,200 providers, and more than 25,000 employees, making the service desk one of the most important services they provide. In 2016, Ardent began the transition from McKesson to Epic and needed to devote its in-house analysts entirely to that project. They began working with CereCore to provide support on the legacy systems, which included McKesson as well as some laboratory and surgery systems.

As Ardent began to grow, the partnership with CereCore grew as well, leading to CereCore providing all level 1 service desk support. When Ardent acquired additional hospitals in 2018 and 2019, they expanded CereCore support to handle the increased number of calls resulting from their growth.

HOW WE HELPED

Finding value in outsourcing
Finding financial value is almost always the first objective of outsourcing service desk functions. For Ardent, finding the right balance of resources for incidents wasn't simply the first step, but continues to be re-evaluated throughout the partnership with CereCore.

Rick Keller, CIO at Ardent Health Services, describes the shared responsibility of finding the right balance of support resources for the value and customer satisfaction they require. "We realized that we needed outside help to address our expanding environment and a conversion to a new EMR. So measuring that right price for the average speed came through some trial and error and experiences that we were able to share with CereCore."

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"In our situation, there was a diminishing level of return if we were too quick to answer for the price point to achieve immediate responses. We discovered that our best practice was for 80% of our calls to be answered between 60 and 90 seconds to maximize value and customer satisfaction. CereCore consistently performed within the best practice of 80% calls answered within 60 seconds. As we were able to trust that performance, we continued to add more services to our contract with CereCore to help us achieve our goals.

Another critical aspect in partnering with CereCore has been flexibility during large Epic activations. CereCore services during these activations can expand to meet the needs of a two-week activation and then contract back to normal. They've allowed us to partner with outside parties and bring in agents who can seamlessly integrate into their operation and provide a high priority service desk for a limited amount of time. We can answer the calls quickly, keep satisfaction high, and help with the adoption of the EMR while minimizing frustration during the activation."

Flexibility in partnership

An outsourced service desk should provide four pillars of value:

- Financial Value

- Flexibility

- Customer Satisfaction

- Process Improvement

Rather than furloughing some of their employees, CereCore took the opportunity to go through our online Epic training to further improve their ability to understand and address the calls as they come in. In June, we saw the volumes pick back up to 85-90% and in July, 100%.

JIM MAYERCIK
Vice President of IT
Ardent Health

The Ardent and CereCore partnership has established a mutually beneficial cost model, flexibility through years of growth, and success in addressing customer satisfaction.

Jim Mayercik, Vice President of IT at Ardent Health Services, describes what this commitment to continuous improvement and flexibility meant during the height of the COVID-19 crisis. "When the CDC recommended that hospitals stop performing elective procedures, we saw a significant reduction in the number of calls for the first couple of weeks. The full impact of this reduction was initially hidden due to the fact we also had a go-live event in one of our major markets, which inflated calls. In early April, it became apparent that we were running about 25 to 30% of anticipated calls. CereCore also noticed the trend and proposed a two-month reduction in our billing due to the downturn in volume, with the option to extend it should the

Timeline

JULY 2016
Ardent transition from McKesson into Epic

CereCore providing Legacy Support

FEBRUARY 2017
CereCore providing Level 1 Help Desk Support

DECEMBER 2019
Ardent acquired University of Texas Health - East Texas, increasing call volume by 30%

JANUARY 2017
CereCore providing Network Architecture Technical Services

NOVEMBER 2018
Added Help Desk Support for acquired LHP Hospitals

MARCH 2020
Extended and expanded support for all Ardent Sites
+ Level 1 and Level 1.5 Help Desk Support

Open communication fosters continuous improvement

Analyzing service desk trends is the first step in driving process improvement, but the second is open communication. Mayercik points out that Ardent continues to lean on CereCore to share trending information after improving processes with critical groups within the organization.

"One of the metrics CereCore provided that was very critical to us was the number of calls that our CEO was getting from our physicians. We tracked this metric weekly and I had to sit in front of the CEO and review with him," says Mayercik. "Probably the biggest improvement came from reevaluating our levels of service." CereCore employed queue manipulation and prioritization to address calls from physicians at a quicker rate and with more experienced resources. Through this strategy, calls from Ardent physicians where answered three times faster than calls coming into a standard line.

"Weekly and monthly CereCore metrics are allowing us to work with our markets to learn from each other," adds Keller. "Who's doing what better, or who's not doing as well. We are analyzing why there may be more calls for password resets from New Mexico than from Texas, and we are finding many such opportunities to continually improve and refine our processes."

Keller also explained how open communication allows a partner to work on behalf of their organization. "Shortly after Chris Wickersham was assigned to our account, I included him in our monthly leadership meeting so that he could learn about our strategic drivers and potential changes as a result of these initiatives. He has an open forum with all of our leaders. They know and trust him as an extension of our IT services environment to support our end users on the other end of the phone. End users don't care that it's a separate entity. CereCore is acting on our behalf through our service desk for Ardent Health Services to help meet our company's needs for technology services."

ABOUT US

CereCore® provides IT services that make it easier for you to focus on supporting hospital operations and transforming healthcare through technology. With a heritage rooted in our nation's top-performing hospitals, we serve as leaders and experts in technology, operations, data security, and clinical applications. We partner with clients to become an extension of the team through comprehensive IT and application support, technical professional and managed services, IT advisory services, and EHR consulting, because we know firsthand the power that integrated technology has on patient care and communities.

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