



Customer Profile

Jefferson Memorial Hospital Prescribes FirstClass to Deliver Secure Online Communication Services for Physicians and Hospital Staff

Jefferson Memorial Hospital (JMH), an independent health care facility located in Jefferson County, Missouri, has been a vital member of the Twin City area for over 50 years. The hospital is committed to providing the highest standard of care in the community with services that demonstrate excellence in clinical outcomes and a dedicated staff.

In 2005, JMH began looking for a new approach to online communication when faced with the rising costs for maintaining its current IT infrastructure. The hospital required a solution that was not only cost effective and easy to manage and administer, but would also provide them with a secure environment that would enable them to comply with the strict patient privacy requirements for the health care industry set forth by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

The Challenge: Find an Economical and Flexible Solution for Secure Online Collaboration

As a non-profit organization with limited resources, JMH needed to find an alternative to Microsoft Exchange after realizing that system upgrades, migrating to a new server, third-party add-on applications, and client access licensing issues were cost-prohibitive based on the hospital's conservative IT budget. The hospital evaluated several vendors and developed a list of key attributes that would be necessary for the solution to be successful in their environment. Specifically, the solution needed to be cost effective, flexible, and easy to deploy and manage; provide a secure environment to help meet the HIPAA regulations for privacy; offer multiple platform support (since the hospital wanted to move to a Linux server); enable remote access for users outside the facility; and also offer mobile device support for anytime, anywhere access.

Beyond basic email and calendaring features, JMH wanted the ability to build a departmental discussion area that would help promote better communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing between and among the various departments to help improve efficiency.

While researching the different email servers, Josh Bauman, Systems Analyst at JMH, remembered using FirstClass while attending college at Maryville University in St. Louis several years earlier. Bauman thought it would be worth looking into because he knew it offered not only a secure email and calendaring solution, but also collaboration features and forums for knowledge-sharing. After meeting with FirstClass and evaluating the features and capabilities available in the integrated suite of applications, the choice was clear.

“We are using FirstClass in so many ways beyond just email. As a resource for our facility, FirstClass gives us opportunities for communication and collaboration that we didn’t have before. It has opened doors we didn’t even know were there.”

- Jay Rosener
Network Administrator
Jefferson Memorial Hospital

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Powering collaborative online communities.

Physician Forum and Boardroom Community

“Being a hospital, it is not uncommon to encounter communication issues between physicians, physician offices, administration, and the hospital in general,” says Bauman. “Many of the doctors didn’t have email, so the only way that they received correspondence from administration was via a paper trail and their physical mail boxes, which wasn’t very efficient. The physicians wanted a quick and easy way to communicate with administration and the Board of Directors and asked us if a Web-based forum or blog would be the answer.”

Once JM starting rolling out FirstClass, they quickly realized that the software suited the physicians’ requests to a ‘T’. “When we asked the physicians what they wanted to be able to do in the intranet, they told us they wanted to have logged conversations; share documents in a secure workspace; and see their meeting schedules,” says Bauman. “We were able to tell them that we could do all of that in FirstClass. I could see right away that this was a perfect fit.”

To address the communication requirements for the physicians, Bauman purchased additional mailboxes for the doctors and set up a physician forum that administration, physicians, and the Board of Directors could access. “They can post issues, concerns, ideas, or comments on new policies, and the senior executives in the hospital and the Board members can read and respond to the posts in short order. With our previous system, a physician might need to send an email to 15 different people. Now they send one email within the online community and ensure it gets to the right people,” says Bauman.

Another item stored in this forum is a physician newsletter that is also available in hard copy to all of the offices. Now, if a doctor prefers an electronic copy of the newsletter, he or she can download it directly from the forum.

The success of the physician forum led to the creation of a Boardroom Community for Board members. “In the past, information packets were mailed to the Board members prior to the Board meetings each month. Now, if they wish, they can sign in to the online community and download the packets instead of having to wait for the courier to deliver

them to their house,” says Bauman. “Additionally, the Board members now have email access, so if they need to respond to an issue they can send an email to someone inside the hospital, which is a real time saver. Previously, if our Board president needed assistance, he would have to pick up the phone and call the administrative secretary who would then call me and I would call him back. With FirstClass, there is an immediate connection. It has helped eliminate communication barriers that we had in the past.”

The Employee Lounge

One of the most effective online environments at JM has been their ‘Employee Lounge.’ Not everyone at the hospital requires email access, but there was a need to provide hospital-wide access to newsletters and other announcements. According to Bauman, they were able to create the Employee Lounge in less than two days and it has met their requirements and more.

“We published the Employee Lounge to the intranet and made it the default homepage for all of our PCs, PC on Wheels and laptops on our medical tower. When users sign on they have access to our ‘everybody mail’ and can see all the messages in the Employee Lounge, as well as all the sub-directories such as cafeteria menus, the buy and sell area, and customer service scores.”

Bauman also created a forum in the Employee Lounge where nurses and clinical staff can go to discuss the hospital’s electronic health care information system, MEDITECH, whenever there is an upgrade and training is underway for the new features. The MEDITECH forum offers the nurses and staff a sounding board where they can easily come together to discuss the system and post their questions or concerns. A group in IT moderates the forum and is able to quickly resolve issues through the online community. “We post training schedules in the forum which include who is in each class and the notes of each appointment. This way, a nurse can go to the Employee Lounge, see what classes are being held and when, who has signed up for them, and if there are any spaces still available,” says Bauman.

“We were also very impressed with how easy it was to install the system – we just downloaded the zip files for the FirstClass server, logged in, assigned DNS numbers and a host name, set up the users, and boom: we were in business!”

Fostering Effective Communications in Every Department

Bauman built departmental discussion areas using FirstClass Conferences to facilitate group email, calendars, and a common area to share documents. This enables departments to easily collaborate and share resources within a secure online environment. Bauman managed the implementation by rolling it out one department at a time. He spent about a week and a half in each department and trained a 'super user,' making them the primary 'How To' contact for FirstClass within their area.

"The super users were very enthusiastic and became easily immersed in the system. Because of these primary contacts, I had very few issues that had to be escalated to me or our department," says Bauman. "I think the biggest problem I had was getting people on FirstClass fast enough! Once they saw the departmental areas and features like the Employee Lounge, the PTO calendars, and the chat features, I had people asking, 'When am I going to get on the new system?' 'I want to be on the new system.'"

Medical Records uses their departmental area to communicate about chart locations, among other things. They post messages indicating which doctors have which charts signed out, who will be in late, and information about upcoming meetings.

The Pharmacy department uses their departmental area to exchange information about different drugs and IV's. "They have a discussion area for pharmacy technicians, pharmacists and product areas. Additionally, there is an area for formulary management, which covers what drugs are used in the hospital and for what purpose," says Bauman.

Calendaring & Scheduling

Most of the departments in the hospital use the calendaring, scheduling and time management capabilities that are integrated within the hospital's FirstClass environment. According to Bauman, a perfect example is their PTO or 'Paid Time Off' calendar. "The supervisors have access to edit the calendar online, so rather than keeping the vacation schedules on paper, most of the departments and almost all of the clinical floors put their vacation calendars in

FirstClass. Now, from anywhere in the hospital, or off-site, they can log in and see who is on vacation and if they need to find additional staff for a particular time period."

Another example is the 'call schedules.' "As a hospital, we are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and there is always someone on call," says Bauman. "We've created what we term the 'call conference' which contains several call schedules including an IS call, a clinical engineering call, and a maintenance call. If someone wants to know who is on call, they contact the people at the switchboard who then go into the schedules on their FirstClass desktop, open up the conference, pick the department they need, check the call schedule, and find out instantly who is on call that particular day and the phone number to reach this person. It's that easy. Previously, people used Excel or Word documents that changed every 25 minutes, so they had to either print them out, or retype them and deliver them to the different departments. Now, the editors can change the schedule in short fashion. They go in, change who is on call, and as soon as they hit 'Save,' everybody can see the changes. It's instantaneous."

"We are using FirstClass in so many ways beyond just email. The calendaring is so much richer than what we were able to do with Outlook. For example, the group calendaring and conference calendaring features offer tools people didn't realize they needed until they started using them."

Bauman also created electronic calendars for booking the hospital's conference rooms. "Previously, our marketing department kept track of all of the bookings manually in an appointment book. I created calendars for each of the conference rooms and have them point to a master conference schedule that can be edited electronically in FirstClass," says Bauman. "When it was done manually, any time a manager needed a conference room, they would have to call the marketing department to find out if a room was available. Now, they can look at the online calendar and automatically see what rooms are available. It has greatly improved the whole process of booking meetings."

Several other departments are using the calendaring and scheduling capabilities within the FirstClass environment. For example, the Pharmacy and Patient Accounts department uses the system for their PTO calendars as well as departmental calendars.

Bauman says another departmental area that has become extremely popular is their nursing area. “The nursing scheduler needed the ability to document and publish open nursing shifts, so I set up a FirstClass conference. Now, nurses can go to this document and see what shifts are available, when, and on what days, for any particular floor. In addition, inside the nursing area we have discussion areas for each one of our floors with the PTO calendars inside them.”

Bauman has also built a simple ticket tracking system with FirstClass for the IS department, which allows a user to open a ticket when they are having problems with their computer equipment. The ticket is received by the help desk who can assign it to a technician for follow up. “It all winds up documented in a FirstClass forum and when it’s done, it goes into a completed area where our supervisor can look at it, see when the ticket was created, and how long it took to finish it,” says Jay Rosener, Network Administrator at JM.

Bauman is in discussion with Aptiris, a FirstClass channel partner, to build more robust ticket tracking applications for maintenance, clinical, engineering, IS and telecom. His goal is to streamline that process into an integrated solution for all departments, so anyone in the hospital will be able to go into one place in FirstClass – preferably the Employee Lounge – open up a work request, send it to the appropriate department, and get it done.

Addressing Legal and Policy-Based Compliance Requirements

One of the key reasons that JM chose FirstClass was that they required an email system that could offer easy access to distributed users without sacrificing security. Specifically, HIPAA sets a national standard for privacy of health information including the transmittal of health information in electronic form, to protect the privacy of consumers. HIPAA requires identifiable health information to be encrypted if it is sent over a public network such as the Internet.

FirstClass provides the hospital with an encrypted email connection so any time a doctor or nurse needs to send patient information via email, be it an alert from MEDITECH if a patient’s blood pressure drops below a certain level, or confidential information to an outside vendor, FirstClass

alleviates all of the privacy issues relating to HIPAA that could occur in a hospital.

“When we need to send confidential information to one of our vendors, we give them one of our FirstClass licenses and they can get into FirstClass from their site and get the email. Whether it’s an email message, a document inside of an email, or a document sitting in a forum, it’s all secure and we do not have privacy issues to be concerned about,” says Rosener.

Another area where the encrypted email connection is very important for the hospital is at the nursing stations where they may have 10 nurses sharing five desktops. FirstClass allows the nurses to sign into the mail application no matter what computer they are using.

“With the encryption of the Web site and the encryption of the client, it speaks to so many regulatory issues that health care has to worry about. What’s really impressive about FirstClass is there is no additional cost for this functionality, it’s all right there, built into the system.”

“Basically, this is another whole privacy issue for us,” says Rosener. “With FirstClass, we can leave a PC signed on because that PC itself doesn’t have rights to anything and there isn’t any patient data on it. The nurse has to sign into FirstClass to get to his or her email or sign into MEDITECH to get to that system. For all the talk about a single sign on, HIPAA is really on the cusp of saying, ‘no, we’re not going to do single sign on because it’s just too easy in a health care environment for anybody to access a PC and compromise the security of patient data.’”

Long time storage of historical email messages is another important regulatory concern for the health care industry, providing JM with another compelling reason to select FirstClass. FirstClass Archive Services provides comprehensive archiving, retention and searching capabilities for all FirstClass messages. “If a doctor writes an email to one of the managers and it has a patient’s name in it or anything to do with their health record such as a diagnosis, medication, or a health concern, that legitimately should be a part of their medical record. It can’t be deleted. If it is deleted and we couldn’t recover it, we’d be in trouble,” says Rosener. “Now, with the archiving function, it doesn’t matter if someone deletes correspondence, it’s still in the archive.”

Rosener has been very impressed with the wide range of features available in FirstClass, when comparing it to other enterprise-class messaging systems that require expensive third-party add-ons to achieve the same results. He has identified significant savings for the hospital, not only because of the FirstClass archiving capabilities, but also due to the mirror backup functionality that is part of the solution.

Connecting Distributed Employees

When looking for the new solution, a big priority for Bauman was enabling remote access for their users who were clamoring to get their mail from home. With FirstClass, JMH is able to offer remote access via a hand-held mobile device or the users can simply download the client on their PCs and connect to the server. There are no licensing issues with client software and server software.

The virtual access capabilities have worked really well for the doctors and also for the medical transcription staff who work out of their homes. The transcribers listen on the telephone to a doctor giving his notes and then type the notes on a computer. In order to give the managers access to these transcribers who, due to the nature of their roles, spend their whole day on the telephone, Bauman loaded the FirstClass Instant Messaging tool on the home computers and now their manager can chat with the workers over an encrypted connection. "This speaks to the data throughput and how efficient the data is," says Bauman. "They see no lag at home on dial-up connections with the client installed on their machines. With FirstClass, its real time – it happens instantly when using the chat feature."

Training and Support

FirstClass offers multiple resource areas to help Bauman's team to easily access product and support materials, receive the latest product updates, and provide feedback and enhancement suggestions on products and services. In addition to FirstClass Online (FCOL), a peer-to-peer environment support group, and FirstClass technical support, JMH has also benefited from a full range of support from FirstClass channel partner, Aptiris, including the initial training, installation planning and configuration, administration and custom application development.

Bauman and Rosener have been extremely satisfied with the three avenues of support. They can either go to FirstClass Online where they will find a complete library of all features and capabilities of FirstClass for extensive Online help; contact FirstClass technical support where they can expect a quick turn around and informative feedback about the extent of the issue and when they will see a resolution; or speak with their contacts at Aptiris with whom they have been particularly impressed.

"The folks at Aptiris have been a great resource. It is clear that they are experts on the FirstClass solutions and services. We could not have experienced better training than

we received from Aptiris. They are an extremely valuable asset," says Rosener. "One of the things that the channel partner experience has done for us is it has given us direct access to a group of people who do high level development of applications, like RAD and applications inside of FirstClass. When we were first learning the system, they gave us a guiding hand on the best way to implement. It was nice to have that up close and personal resource with people who do inside development."

Rosener adds: "Aptiris also offers their customers enhancements or niche applications that they create in FirstClass. For us, they have built a survey piece and are working on a help desk extension to help meet our needs.

They also have their own version of FirstClass Online called 'Aptiris Online,' and have put a Conference on our system that is connected into their FirstClass server. This enables us to see how they have resolved support issues for other FirstClass customers. It gives us an extra knowledge base."

"With Exchange, unless your mail system sits on a SAN (Storage Area Network), which is a very expensive proposition, you either have to shut down the mail system to get a full backup or you have to buy third-party software to get an active backup. With FirstClass, we did not have to incur any extra expenses for a third-party add-on or additional licenses."

FirstClass: The Perfect Prescription for Success

"In the past, as far as email problems were concerned, it took us a while to get to it because we were just too busy. But email is one of those areas that can become a big cultural issue very quickly if you don't pay attention to it," says Rosener. "With FirstClass, it is almost scary how fast we can respond. If someone asks for a change today, they're very likely going to get it tomorrow. People are really surprised that they can ask for something, and it's just done!"

ABOUT FIRSTCLASS

The FirstClass Collaboration Suite is designed to facilitate and enhance communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing by connecting all stakeholders across an organization's community — including employees, customers, partners, and suppliers — within a secure online environment. FirstClass brings together a variety of popular technologies within a fully integrated suite of applications that is cost-effective, flexible, and easy to manage and administer.

ONE TECHNOLOGY, MANY SOLUTIONS

The FirstClass Collaboration Suite has been designed to provide businesses with a cost-effective solution that will:

Connect Distributed Employees

Technology has enabled businesses to break down the barriers of the traditional “9 to 5” workday in the office. Many organizations employ home-based employees working from offices around the world or the business itself may be entirely virtual. FirstClass provides a single location for employees to securely connect, collaborate on projects, and share information, regardless of their physical location.

Enable Knowledge Sharing Across the Organization

An organization's greatest strength lies in the knowledge of its people. Too often, many businesses miss out on opportunities or make costly errors in decision making due to the lack of effective internal communication and timely sharing of information. FirstClass provides a flexible and accessible environment that ensures critical information can be quickly exchanged between relevant parties.

Replace “Pieced-together” Systems

The time and resources required to manually integrate disparate systems across an organization can be daunting. FirstClass' “single solution” approach ensures that organizations benefit from a multitude of features and capabilities without the additional expenses associated with integration, administration, and user training on multiple, disconnected systems.

Enable a Team-based Approach to Problem-solving

FirstClass delivers a proven collaborative environment that provides organizations with a powerful facility for staff to effectively work together on projects online. Documents, schedules, voice files, graphics, and other information can be maintained within topic-based discussion areas that enable project team members to easily share and collaborate on specific topics of interest.

Run on Multiple Platforms

FirstClass has been designed to fit into diverse computing environments through its broad support for multiple platforms, including — Windows, MAC OS X (PPC or Intel), Linux Client and web browsers — enabling anytime, anywhere access to the system from any type of Internet-enabled computer or mobile device.

Contact Us

To learn more about FirstClass solutions and services from Aptiris and how they can benefit your organization, please visit www.aptiris.com or contact:

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