

CASE STUDY *DESERT ONCOLOGY*

OVERVIEW

Business Profile

- One of the Southwest's leading Oncology Centers
- Specialties: Hematology, Internal Medicine, Oncology
- First location opened in 1978
- Three locations, up from one

Size

- Nine physicians, plus support staff
- Around 90 patients daily, on average
- No in-house IT Department

Business Challenges

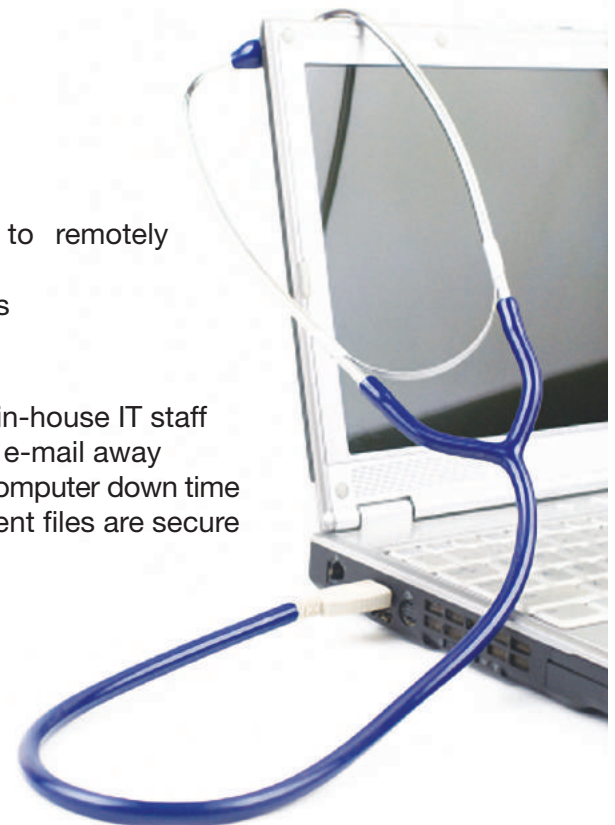
- Medical records not computerized
- Records not backed up
- No computer network
- IT duties performed by Office Manager
- Needs strict adherence to HIPPA standards
- No wireless connectivity

Solution

- Set up eight server network
- Set up wireless network
- Computerize medical records
- Daily off-site storage back-up
- Phone support, including ability to remotely assess and repair
- Easier to adhere to HIPPA standards

Results

- Significant cost savings over hiring in-house IT staff
- IT professionals just a phone call or e-mail away
- More productive office by reducing computer down time
- Peace of mind in knowing their patient files are secure





CASE STUDY DESERT ONCOLOGY

BRIEF

Mesa, Arizona-based Desert Oncology has grown into the East Valley's leader in the fight against cancer and blood diseases. Founded in 1978, Desert Oncology now has three locations across the Valley, and provides the latest expert and comprehensive treatment options for its patients. While Desert Oncology experienced a steady growth curve over the past 30 years, the company quickly realized in 2007 that it needed to become more technology advanced to continue serving its patients with quality care.

Just three years ago, Desert Oncology's computer system was a peer-to-peer network, with no wireless connectivity. When an employee had a computer problem, they would call Julie Casillas, the company's practice administrator. As the number of patients and employees increase, she began to find that serving as Desert Oncology's IT department was a daunting task—keeping her from completing her regular duties. "It was more specific problems on individual computers that I had to address, it was just too time-consuming for you to do when you really have a full-time job doing something else," Casillas says. She quickly found herself having to drop everything to deal with computer issues at not just her main office, but at Desert Oncology's second location as well. "While running down the hall to deal with a computer issue was one thing, trying to diagnose problems over the phone with employees at Desert Oncology's other office was another," she added.

“[W]e were as simple as you could get, and now I feel like we're probably as detailed and as complicated as you can get in a medical office, and we wouldn't be there without them (Catalyst).”

....Julie Casillas of Desert Oncology

In the digital age of readily accessible information, all of Desert Oncology's patient files were still being stored in old-fashioned filing cabinets, with two or three employees spending their workdays searching for patients' charts. In a practice which averages 90 patients a day, this was an obvious misdirection of resources. Compounding the problem was a 1996 federal law known as HIPPA (The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.) This statute mandates uniform standards for privacy and portability of patient medical records, and it's best instituted when records are computerized. With Desert Oncology's files stacking up and being misplaced, it was becoming impossible to comply with HIPPA.

As Desert Oncology expanded to its third location, Casillas knew something had to be done. That



something was a phone call to Catalyst Computer Technologies. Catalyst specializes in solving IT problems for small companies, offering them a team of IT professionals at a fraction of the cost of hiring an in-house IT department. CEO Ed Garay says, “They had a real need for cutting-edge IT support, but, at their size, they couldn’t justify a full-time salary, plus benefits, to bring someone on-board. Catalyst was happy to come in, assess their needs, and develop an all-encompassing IT strategy designed to meet their specific needs.”

BACKGROUND

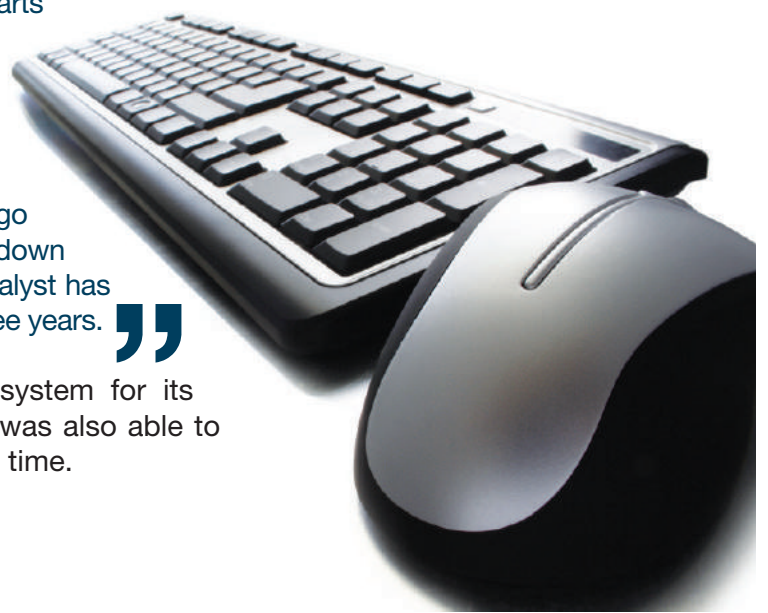
Since 1978, Desert Oncology Associates has specialized in offering patients and their families a caring, respectful choice in how to best deal with having cancer. Their core business is healthcare and they didn’t have the time, inclination or expertise to deal with an increasingly complicated IT situation. With a third office in the works, Desert Oncology knew it had to do something to shore up its IT needs.

“Before we had Catalyst, the only IT we really had was myself, which I’m not an IT person, but I’m the most, apparently, computer-literate person in the office, so basically anytime anybody had a problem it came to me, interrupted my day to go try to resolve it for them,” says Julie Casillas, practice administrator at Desert Oncology. “We did also utilize one person’s spouse for major problems that he could come on weekends and fix something, but it was real sporadic.”

Focusing on how to align Desert Oncology’s business and IT needs to operate more efficiently, Catalyst first set up an eight server network—allowing Desert Oncology to electronically convert all patient records. This made all patient records quickly and easily available to all qualified physicians and personnel.

“It’s like the backbone of a medical practice when you convert...what that is, with electronic medical records you take all the charts, all the information on the patients and then put it into a computer, so that the doctors have access to everything, the nurses have access to everything, front office, everybody sees the same stuff at the same time,” Casillas says, adding, “where we used to fight for paper and hunt for charts for hours, we used to have two or three people just looking for charts all day long, now everything’s on the computer and we can get it and that’s a huge thing and a time saver for our office. So having that running all the time and not having it go down is critical because if the system’s down then we have no patient records, so Catalyst has kept us going at all times for the last three years.”

By moving to an electronic filing system for its patients records, Desert Oncology was also able to see more patients and reduce wait time.



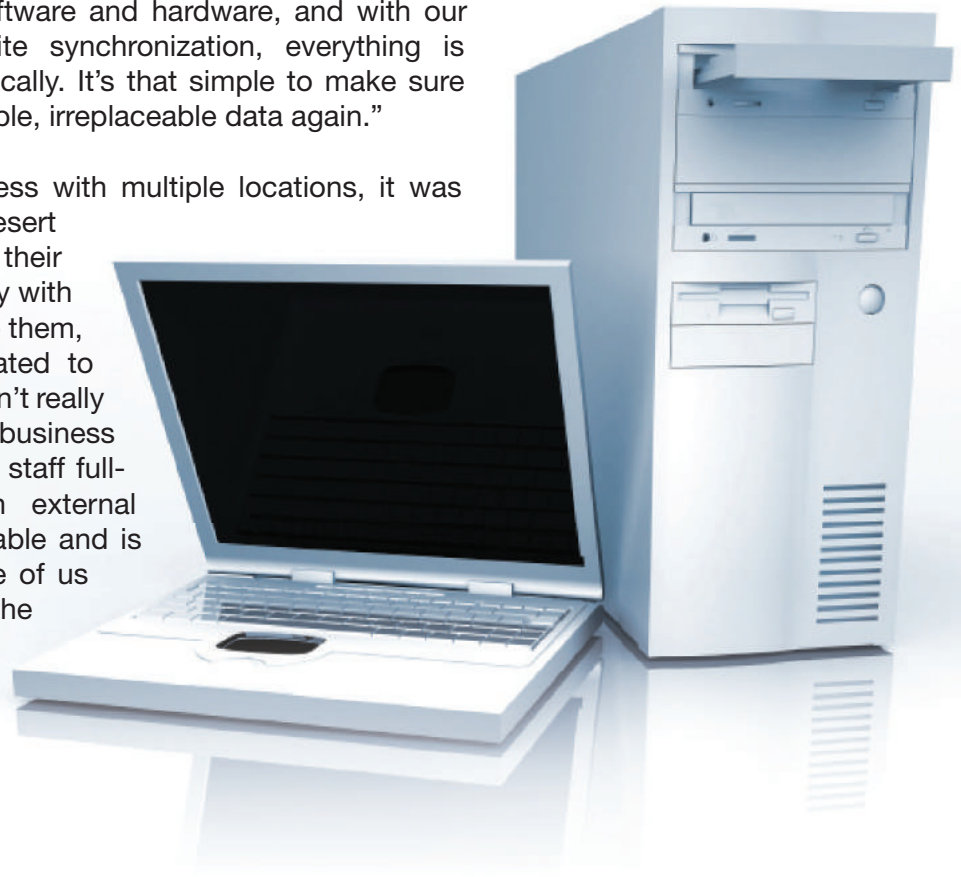
Because HIPPA is strict about making sure medical records remain private, Desert Oncology needed an IT service proved that would protect their patient files. “Doctor/patient confidentiality is of utmost importance to us, of course, and from the beginning of our relationship with Catalyst, we’ve always known they could be trusted with vital patient information,” she says. By providing the latest in security and firewall protection, Catalyst gives Desert Oncology peace of mind in knowing their patient records are secure.

For Desert Oncology, Catalyst’s ability to remotely access its computers to deal with issues and make needed repairs was an important service option. “In the past, if there was a problem in another office and I couldn’t talk them through it over the phone, I’d have to drop everything and rush over there,” says Casillas, adding, “Now, it’s almost magical – I can be sitting in front of my computer screen and watch as a Catalyst technician takes control remotely, and does what needs to be done to get me up and running again.” With the click of a button on their computer screens, Desert Oncology’s employees can gain remote assistance from Catalyst’s experts -reducing an employee’s downtime.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

For Desert Oncology, strict compliance with HIPPA was just part of the services Catalyst could provide them. It was also important that patients’ records be backed up on a regular basis, and that those records never be permanently lost. Catalyst’s COO, Steve Jaramillo said, “Sometimes the unexpected can happen and you lose your equipment, programs and information. Catalyst offers disaster recovery services that will restore software and hardware, and with our data backup off-site synchronization, everything is backed up automatically. It’s that simple to make sure you never lose valuable, irreplaceable data again.”

Being a small business with multiple locations, it was also important for Desert Oncology to entrust their IT needs to a company with a solid commitment to them, a true partner dedicated to growing together. “It isn’t really practical for a small business like ours to hire an IT staff full-time, so having an external company that is reliable and is basically taking care of us 24/7 is definitely the way to go for us,” Casillas says.



SUMMARY

With no IT department, Desert Oncology was struggling to manage day-to-day computer problems, technology issues across its three locations and a growing number of patient files. On top of managing those issues, Desert Oncology was faced with meeting new HIPPA standards and converting patient files into an electronic format. Not able to afford an IT department equipped to meet their growing needs, Desert Oncology turned to Catalyst Computer Technologies' and subscribed to its managed service plan. This partnership has resulted in reduced downtime, convenience of remote access assistance, secure electronic patient files and peace of mind knowing their records are backed up in the event of a disaster. Now, Desert Oncology is able to operate more efficiently as an office by reducing IT costs and increasing employee productivity.

“The value it's tremendous, they're able to do way more, more for less, I mean they can do more than employing a full-time IT person could do for us and, of course, it doesn't cost us as much, paying an IT person is very expensive, so it's so it gives us more flexibility, more constant help and at a lower overall cost to do it ourselves... well, where we were before them was nowhere, with computers, I mean we were as simple as you could get, and now I feel like we're probably as detailed and as complicated as you can get in a medical office, and we wouldn't be there without them.”

“ I would say they're awesome, they're reliable, they're able to offer advice and help you figure out what you need so, you know, when you really don't necessarily know, their expertise in the field is great, and they can help you implement whatever it is you want to implement effectively. ”

