Healthcare

West Dorset Speaks to the Future with Polycom® SpectraLink® Voice over Wireless LAN Solutions

Daily Use

- Voice communications for intensive care unit, on-call pathology labs, emergency units and other urgent healthcare services areas

Solution

- Polycom® SpectraLink Wireless Telephones connected to a Siemens Realtis telephone switch and operating over Cisco Aironet 350 wireless access points throughout the hospital

Results and Benefits

- Support for voice and data on one converged wireless LAN network
- Immediate response to patient needs
- Minimized use of the hospital's overhead paging system
- Secure system that does not interfere with the hospital's sensitive medical equipment

Background

In the world of high-tech innovations, London-based West Dorset Hospital is putting one of the most traditional interpersonal forms of communication—voice—back in the hands of its staff and with exceptional results. West Dorset hospital staff now use Polycom® SpectraLink® Wireless Telephones to respond to patient needs immediately, even while moving about the hospital and managing their critical daily tasks. In addition to taking pride in being one of the most technologically advanced hospitals in the U.K., West Dorset's strides are bringing it the greatest accolades of all—great patient service.

The hospital installed a wireless local area network (WLAN) for their data needs, and quickly realized they could add voice to the network to get more out of their WLAN investment. The hospital deployed SpectraLink Wireless Telephones in its intensive care unit, on-call pathology labs, emergency units, and other areas crucial to providing urgent healthcare services.

Staff in the 400-bed hospital actively uses the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones, especially during the night when the hospital is short staffed. The system has proved useful enough that it is increasingly used throughout the three-story facility.

"This system enables staff to go about their work and be mobile, without having to be next to an ordinary telephone," said Brian Stalker, West Dorset IT Manager. "It also means less missed calls, so if people are ringing the lab, they will always get an answer. In the past, if the lab technician wasn't in, the call would go unanswered."

A Perfect Physical

West Dorset began its voice over WLAN rollout by initially providing a few key staff members with SpectraLink Wireless Telephones. Interest in the added mobility quickly spread throughout the hospital and the IT department disbursed the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones where they would be strongly needed.

The hospital, which in 2002 fielded 50,000 telephone calls, found it more efficient to have healthcare employees share the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones. If staff members are on the run making patient rounds

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throughout the hospital, they simply take the handset along with them to the various areas of the hospital in which they visit patients. Later, depending on work demands and staff member schedules, the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones are returned to the nurses' station for other staff members to use.

Typically, five handsets are held back from routine work and reserved in the event the pager system malfunctions or to circumvent other emergency situations.

Hospital employees applaud West Dorset's high-tech initiatives, but the roll-out of applications on its WLAN was gradual. Initially, West Dorset focused its WLAN efforts on making data systems more accessible to its staff and visiting personnel. Once the decision had been made to provide its employees with data mobility, voice logically followed since no additional wireless infrastructure equipment was required.

"Our initial objective was to enable visiting consultants with laptops to resolve a space shortage issue," Stalker said. "We also wanted to move toward electronic patient records and we knew WLAN was the way to go. By adding voice, we really installed a value-added product that makes much greater use of our network investment."

Curing Maladies

In addition to using SpectraLink Wireless Telephones to better connect staff to patients and colleagues, West Dorset is beginning to replace its paging system with the handsets, so the entire facility can benefit from the service.

West Dorset obtained the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones via the U.K.-based system integrator Voyager Networks. The SpectraLink Wireless Telephones connect to a Siemens Realtis telephone switch and operate over Cisco Aironet 350 wireless access points that are disbursed throughout the 41,000 square-meter (441,000 sq. ft.) hospital.

Once the hospital had the infrastructure installed, the system took a mere two weeks to deploy. West Dorset exercised extreme caution in ensuring that the system did not interfere with existing hospital equipment.

"It was imperative that handsets did not interfere with electronic medical equipment, so we asked our electronics department to investigate that aspect. After careful assessment, they were happy to report that the SpectraLink Wireless Telephones did not cause any interference whatsoever. One of the many reasons we chose SpectraLink Wireless Telephones was because the system did not interfere with our equipment," Stalker said. "Our employees love it and our patients have come to expect our state-of-the-art service."

Learn more.

To find out how Polycom solutions can help your organization, visit us at www.polycom.com or speak with a Polycom Account Representative.

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Rev 061909