



## CASE STUDY

# Lancaster General Relies on Captaris RightFax for Excellent Patient Care

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## BACKGROUND

For more than 100 years, Lancaster General ([www.lancastergeneral.org](http://www.lancastergeneral.org)) an award-winning hospital and healthcare system, has upheld its commitment to maintaining the health of all Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, residents.

Lancaster General is a certified trauma center with 521 patient beds and more than 5,000 employees, of which close to 400 are physicians and surgeons. The hospital has earned numerous recognitions. It is one of only three Pennsylvania hospitals to have obtained Magnet Hospital Recognition, the American Nurses Association's (ANA) highest honor for excellence in nursing. Also, in July 2003 (for the fourth year in a row) Lancaster General was named one of the Top 100 Wired Hospitals. The national benchmarking study conducted by *Hospital & Health Networks*, teamed with McKesson Information Solutions and HIMSS, polls U.S. hospitals on their use of IT to address the key goals of safety and quality, customer service, business processes, work force and disaster readiness.

## THE CHALLENGE

Around-the-clock reliability is a must for every hospital: Lancaster General cares for patients 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The emergency department alone treats more than 55,000 patients a year—an excess of 150 visits per day—while the laboratory performs approximately 2.1 million tests annually, or close to 6,000 tests per day.

Even with such large numbers, Lancaster General works to maintain personal attention for each patient. Such a goal depends upon reliable and flexible technology solutions, as well as other efficiencies.

In the area of communications, Lancaster General recognized a need for a dependable fax solution that would integrate with the various departments and systems used across the organization.

Like other hospitals, Lancaster General relies heavily on fax for business-critical communication. "We manage close to 80,000 faxed pages per month, of which, the vast majority—perhaps 95 percent—is outbound communication," Ed Rund, Information Systems Manager at Lancaster General, said. For instance, every day:

- Lab results are faxed to outside facilities including physician offices and nursing homes.
- "Face sheets" or documents containing patient information—such as name, birth date, insurance and location—are sent via fax to various customers, including physician offices.
- Notifications of patients for transfer are sent from the ER to other hospital departments.
- Urgent information is communicated—often three or four times per week—from the hospital to its network of close to 200 physician offices located across the county.
- Transcribed Medical Records reports and clinical results are faxed to physician offices.

While email is available, a large amount of information (including the examples listed above) is best handled via fax, according to Rund. For example, since nurses are often walking between patient rooms, they will see a fax they can grab to read "on the go" faster than they will have time to sit at a desk to access email.

Like many organizations prior to Y2K, Lancaster General was using manual fax machines and a basic network fax program to handle its fax traffic. Unfortunately, when information about meetings, conferences or other time-sensitive items needed to be sent to physicians it could mean hours of effort for hospital employees. They would print the document, walk it to the physician lounge and place it in physician mailboxes.

When receiving faxes, manual processes also added up to delays and difficulty in disseminating multiple copies of faxes to all the departments who needed the information.

Lancaster General found its previous network fax program saved time; however, it was not as consistent and easy-to-use as other solutions. When the Hospital prepared for Y2K, it looked at replacing its fax software with an enterprise-level solution that would integrate with its new clinical system and other applications. Rund and his team also knew they would need a solution that would support HIPPA compliance efforts.

While reliability and flexibility were top priorities, the new fax solution would need to provide essential functionality at a reasonable cost. "Pricing is always a consideration for hospitals," Rund said. "We historically work on tight budgets."

Finally, any changes or upgrades could not interrupt daily hospital activities. "It's important that it's up 24x7," Rund stated. "Fax is a critical system for relaying healthcare information."

## THE SOLUTION

Lancaster General found affordable, 24x7 reliability in Captaris RightFax, the proven market leader in enterprise fax and e-document delivery solutions. RightFax helps customers achieve significant cost reductions by integrating and automating the flow of a full range of fax, paper and electronic documents and data.

"Without RightFax, employees would spend more time manually sending thousands of faxes per month and we would increase the potential for faxes to be sent to wrong numbers resulting in more phone complaints," Rund said. "We couldn't deliver information in a timely manner without an automated solution like RightFax."

Several departments use RightFax for outbound faxes including Radiology, Business Office, Pre-Anesthesia Clinic, Lab, Visiting Nurses Association, Medical Records, Nursing, Marketing and Physician Communications.

The Hospital has now used RightFax with Brooktrout boards for approximately six years and Rund describes the RightFax server uptime as "terrific." "I can't remember a time that RightFax has been down," Rund commented. "There may have been small incidents, but the only thing I've ever had to do is reboot the server. We've never lost the system for any major period of time."

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RightFax allows some Lancaster General employees to receive faxes in their Microsoft Outlook email Inboxes and to send faxes directly from several business applications—all right at their desktops.

Lancaster General appreciates the flexibility of RightFax to integrate with Hospital applications. "What's nice is that RightFax gives us the ability to solve problems in different areas," said Rund. "The flexibility we have with RightFax in conjunction with a Visual Basic front end we implemented allows us to integrate with any system out there," he continued. "I haven't come across any systems that I can't integrate with RightFax."

Rund said RightFax integrates "seamlessly" with Dictaphone's transcription software. Lancaster General has also set RightFax to manage an automatic feed from its Cerner lab system. "When doctors' offices or in-house lab tests are conducted on blood samples, the results are entered in the lab system which sends the result to RightFax," Rund said. "Then, via RightFax, we automatically fax the results to the physician's office or nursing home."

Since faxes are maintained electronically with RightFax, it is easier and faster to send, receive or store documents. The archival capabilities of RightFax have proven especially helpful for meeting privacy guidelines. To comply with HIPPA, Lancaster General must know where faxes are going and that its own locations for receiving faxes are secure. "RightFax helps us meet HIPAA guidelines by notifying us when a fax goes to a bad phone number or providing a trail through fax archiving so we have accessible data on where faxes are sent," Rund said.

## RESULTS

As a "Most Wired" hospital, Lancaster General has shown commitment and success in meeting hospital goals with efficient processes. In the case of faxing, RightFax processes save on paper, toner and other costs associated with manual fax machines. Rund said they have disposed of about 10 fax machines thus far and he estimates Lancaster General saves thousands of dollars per year by eliminating other hardware and supplies.

Even with this reduction, enhanced productivity returns even greater cost savings for the Hospital. Rund explained, "Paper is part of it, but RightFax reduces employee time for working with a piece of paper, including printing and getting up from the desk to go to a fax machine." Rund calculated that hospital staff members save hours per day with the improved system, which amounts to several thousand dollars per year in equivalent salaries.

Lastly, using RightFax, employees do not just save time; they are freed to focus on other business-critical tasks. This includes the most important responsibility: providing exceptional care for patients so Lancaster General can continue keeping county residents healthy into the next century.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Captaris Business Information Delivery solutions help organizations of all sizes automate the information and document flow throughout the information lifecycle (capture, process, archive, deliver). With a comprehensive suite of software and services, Captaris helps organizations to grow revenues and increase profits while meeting compliance goals. Through a global distribution network of leading enterprise technology partners, Captaris has installed more than 90,000 systems in 95 countries in companies of all sizes, including the entire Fortune 100. For more information, visit [www.captaris.com](http://www.captaris.com) or call 1.800.443.0806.

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