



Cloud-hosted communications for GP surgeries

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With increased pressure being put on the availability of healthcare providers, this has raised the question of how staff can cope with the extended hours and extra workload they are expected to deliver.

We have been working with GP surgeries since our inception in 1983 and latterly multi-site doctors' groups, federations, localities and CCGs.

We can provide healthcare organisations with the communications tools they need to meet their patients' requirements and to streamline everyday tasks to find efficiencies and costings.

“At last we have a telephone system that works for us with flexibility and control built in.”

Kevin Evans

Boundaries Surgery practice manager



Background

GP surgeries require a friendly, prompt and efficient telephone service. Patients are often calling with concerns and they will expect a quick response to their call, therefore the telephony solution surgeries choose must accommodate these requirements.

The challenge

GP surgeries often deal with a large quantity of calls, particularly at peak times, such as Monday mornings. Queuing is a must to ensure all calls are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. In order to allocate staff resource correctly, reporting is needed to monitor the number of calls coming through. This will enable the surgery to work as efficiently as possible.

Certain calls to a surgery could require urgent attention, so the telephone system selected will need to prioritise these calls and ensure that patients are not left waiting for long periods of time, particularly in an emergency situation.

Telephone triage or consultations over the phone are a good way for patients to communicate with their nurse or doctor, so call recording should be considered so that key call information can be easily accessed whenever the need arises.

A disaster recovery plan is also vital so a GP surgery always remains contactable and patient care is never negatively impacted.

The solution

Our cloud-hosted telephony solution meets the demands of standalone GP surgeries, localities, CCGs as well as the criteria for funding from the NHS *General Practice Forward View* spending plan, which embraces the linking of surgeries and investment in people and technology.

Its features include:

Auto attendant - greets the caller with a message saying that their call will be answered quickly ensuring they are not left listening to an engaged tone. Callers can then be offered options to quickly direct their call to the right person, e.g. "Press 1 for appointments, press 2 for test results, press 3 to order a repeat prescription or hold for other enquiries".

Call recording - used to train and coach new receptionists, nurses and practice managers. Plus, the doctor or nurse can have the ability to retrospectively listen to an entire triage call, should they feel the need.

Sophisticated statistical analysis - of inbound/outbound calls can help identify the busiest periods to help plan for staff scheduling.

The cost benefit

Our cloud-hosted solution can usually be purchased on a cost-neutral basis and even create on-going cost savings.

We have successfully migrated GP federations and localities to cloud-hosted telephony systems to give them all the features they rely on, as listed above, while linking to all the practices in their group to share staff resources.

Further ongoing savings are achieved through free calls to UK landlines and mobiles, which is a considerable cost to GP surgeries that use telephone triage or carry out consultations over the phone.



Integration with Patient

Partner - to allow patients to book, cancel, check or change appointments at any time, night or day using their telephone to reduce the number of DNAs.

Call queueing - allows patients' calls to be queued at network level before they are delivered to a handset at the practice. Comfort messages can be played too, which will give patients reassurance that their call will be answered soon and provide information such as opening hours, upcoming flu jab clinics, etc.

Integration with EMIS and SystemOne - can keep a record of call history and interactions with patients, as well as screen-pops on inbound calls to create a sense of customer service and care when answering calls.

Disaster recovery plan - such as failing over to another number (mobile or another practice) ensures no calls are missed.

A cloud-hosted system is paid for on a per user per month basis, meaning there is no capital investment, and is usually on a par with or less than a GP surgery's existing line and call costs.

These cloud-hosted telephone systems can also grow as required, so if another practice joins the federation, they can be easily accommodated.



“We have three large premises and all are now connected as if one. The new phone system is extremely flexible and has seen a significant improvement to the way we work and the patient experience. The ability to connect to other practice sites as we grow or federate wider will be another benefit from the transition to **swcomms**’ solution making us future proof.”

Mark Thomas

Chelston Hall Surgery practice manager

Why us?

The honest answer would be because we are decent, well-trained, highly certified and truly pleasant people. Our people are our strength and the reason our business has been successful for more than three decades.

But we cannot prove that to you until you meet us. Our proof comes from the number of healthcare providers who come back to us for repeat business and from the number who are willing to be subjects of case studies and send us testimonials.

We have also been recognised by our industry with two awards for our success in delivering cloud-hosted solutions. We are particularly active in the healthcare market with a quarter of our cloud-hosted solution customers being GP surgeries.

We are an established business but we are still growing and have plenty of ambition. That said, we remember where we have come from and we will never become too big to care.

What now?

We hope that you like what you have read. If our cloud-hosted telephone solutions look like the best fit for your GP surgery needs, we would love to hear from you.

Please give us a call using our freephone number or email us.

A member of our healthcare team will listen to your requirements to make sure we understand your organisation before giving you the benefit of their experience and expertise.

We are here to help.

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