

Case Study: AeroFlow Healthcare

Casey Hite, VP



With several locations in North Carolina and Tennessee, it's safe to say AeroFlow Healthcare (www.aeroflowinc.com) has its share of paperwork and processes to track.

As with any healthcare organization, constant regulation changes and complex requirements combined with reduced reimbursement require analyzing the business to create a leaner and more profitable organization that can sustain the lower margins. At AeroFlow Inc. the first glaring area needing improvement was managing the paper. Whether it was a new order, a bill, Explanation of Benefits (EOB), insurance contracts, payer audits, or a patient complaint, stacks of paperwork were generated on a daily basis. These documents needed to be stored for compliance and were often retrieved during order processing or billing functions. In order to get a handle on the paper trail, and make sure each person got the files they needed, AeroFlow turned to MedFORCE Technologies and its solutions. AeroFlow's vice-president, Casey Hite, said even with the volume of paperwork AeroFlow has, he started with MedFORCE Scan and eliminated all of his filing cabinets. Once documents could be retrieved electronically Hite found that he wanted to be able to move the documents through their processes elec-

tronically and to control that process. That is when he implemented WorkFLOW for the order process. Hite says he found it so helpful that he started using WorkFLOW for purchasing procedures, to control and manage write-offs, to manage incoming mail, keep track of customer complaints and issues for accreditation and more.

AeroFlow's Challenge

Regardless of what is happening with the nation's economy and reimbursement challenges, AeroFlow has managed to do well year after year. AeroFlow's gross revenue has increased, Hite said, by 35 to 50 percent each year for the past three years. He has managed to stay profitable in spite of reduced reimbursement partially due to the implementation of MedFORCE solutions which enabled him to grow and open four new locations without increasing personnel proportionally.

The number of processes required to run the business increased and got more complex as AeroFlow grew. The challenge was to keep everything simple, ensure that all employees were performing consistently and ensure the all processes were compliant with internal procedures as well as rules and regulations mandated by CMS, Medicaid insurance companies or the Accreditation Commission for Health Care.

Processes were controlled in many different ways. Order processing was controlled through a combination of an Access database and billing software. Other processes were handled with email. For example, if a biller identified a claim that needed to be written off, a request was made to the accounts receivable manager via email. If a patient called to speak with a clinician, an email was sent asking the clinician to contact the patient. If an order came in for a product that was not being stocked, an email was sent to the purchas-

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ing department to order the product. While there were many processes in place, there was no good central place to control them all. With 92 employees and company growth, it became increasingly important to ensure that all processes were designed as lean as possible, eliminating any duplication of effort and implementing controls to monitor that all processes were being followed consistently.

The Solution – WorkFLOW

Realizing the incredible improvement electronic filing had on his organization Hite turned to MedFORCE again and purchased the business process management tool – WorkFLOW.

WorkFLOW enabled Hite to formalize many of the processes that were already in place. For example, a manager has to sign off on a write-off before it is given to the accounts receivable staff to process. When this process was handled via email, there was no real accountability. It was difficult to go back and see that a write-off had the appropriate authorization. Orders were a particularly thorny issue. Prior to WorkFLOW, orders took an average of two days to process. “MedFORCE’s automatic monitoring of AeroFlow’s fax server coupled with the accountability generated by WorkFLOW have virtually eliminated the chance of losing orders and enabled controls to ensure that all orders are processed timely. Even better, we now average four hours to process all incoming orders,” said Hite. Another important area was purchasing of products. Prior to implementing WorkFLOW there were many occasions where not all steps were followed before adding a product to inventory. “For example, we need assurance that the product will be paid and in some cases we need an ABN if there is a question of coverage. Now there is a clear list of steps that must be followed, the WorkFLOW process records each step, date, time and the person that completed it and has eliminated any products being added to inventory without the proper approval and assurance that we will be paid for the product. The WorkFLOW is linked directly to the patient so

everything is in one spot and it is easy to monitor and control.”

“The more a company relies on paperwork to drive its procedures, the less efficient it will be. Managers will never be able to create true accountability unless they have simultaneous access to the same information as their staff,” Hite said. “It now takes fewer labor hours to complete the same tasks. Most importantly, our management can quickly identify employees that are under-performing, as well as identify positions that might not even be needed. Now all processes are mapped (see charts) and that enables us to eliminate unnecessary or duplicate steps and make sure the flow works. At any given time, with a click of the

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*Casey Hite
AeroFlow Healthcare*

mouse, I can see who is doing what and when. My management can also ensure there are no bottlenecks by being able to monitor how much work is assigned to employees and re-allocate that assignment with a click if the employee is getting backlogged or calls in sick. All steps are audited enabling us to ensure that all processes are completed consistently and no steps are missed.”

“More orders can be processed per order intake person. More money can be collected per billing member. Unlike other companies, our labor costs do not mirror increases in revenue, but instead have remained reasonably consistent,” Hite said. “MedFORCE’s WorkFLOW has given our employees the ability to be substantially more productive, and given our managers the ability to quickly identify under-performing employees and address these issues accordingly. One

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of the unexpected improvements was the ease of training employees in new tasks or training new employees. As some of the processes are complex and have many steps the training time used to be extensive. It would take a while till we felt comfortable letting an employee handled a task on their own. With WorkFLOW each step is defined and we can add a description and instructions so as soon as it shows up in that employees queue they can click and know exactly what they are supposed to do."

"The more I work with WorkFLOW, the more I love it; the possibilities are endless with this program," continued Hite. "We have even added a WorkFLOW process for Human Resources to email a happy birthday email to employees on their birthdays! We have implemented workflows for all the processes in the organization so at any given time I can see exactly what everyone is doing and I can get productivity reports showing the quantity of items and who did them. For example, how many writes offs, payer swaps, new product requests, how many special requests, QC audits, even time off requests are all in one place and I can see the productivity or backlog of each employee or department with a couple of clicks."

What Hite most appreciated about MedFORCE's approach to business process management (BPM) was not only an understanding of the market, but the ability to offer customization, to be able to tailor the products to his company's needs.

"We reviewed every product on the market. None of them understood our industry as well as MedFORCE. Every other vendor required AeroFlow to change our

own internal processes in order to meet their software requirements, rather than the other way around. Not MedFORCE," Hite said.

Hite explained they have a programmer come in one week a month to do some odds and ends on the network's back end. But without MedFORCE solutions, he said they'd have to use him much more. MedFORCE solutions make it easy to bring customization into the process, so extra time by the programmer is not needed. Procedures for unique tasks or those that require emails between employees can be developed and implemented easily. WorkFLOW fills in the gaps. Streamlined processes can be added where no process existed before.

Clients Better Served

WorkFLOW has brought results to AeroFlow's clients, too. They can provide a more consistent quality of service to patients/clients. AeroFlow uses WorkFLOW, for example, to automatically alert members of their clinical staff regarding new Oxygen or CPAP/BIPAP setups. Since implementing WorkFLOW, AeroFlow's CPAP Compliance rate has increased from 85% to 93%.

"WorkFLOW assures us that no patient 'falls through the cracks' and most importantly, creates a mechanism that is utilized by AeroFlow's management to hold each clinician accountable for responsibilities assigned to them," Hite said.

"Thanks to MedFORCE," he added, "AeroFlow is several steps ahead of the competition. That's a comfortable place to be."

**For More Information about WorkFLOW
and MedFORCE's Other Products
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