

Physicians Medical Group cuts processing time with Datacap Taskmaster

Overview

Physicians Medical Group of Santa Cruz County (PMG) cut its claims processing time by more than half and provided faster access to data, fewer compliance concerns and more satisfied customers with an integrated solution from Datacap and Bowe Bell & Howell.

The Challenge

PMG processes nearly 250,000 medical claims each year for seven insurance plans and nearly 300 health care providers. Historically, the company outsourced its data entry while trying to keep up with marketplace demands.

After receiving claims from doctors, hospitals and other providers, PMG manually date-stamped, reviewed and sent each claim to an independent service bureau. The bureau scanned the claims, extracted data, and uploaded data and images to a File Transfer Protocol site for PMG to access — a process which could take more than 10 days.

Often, the service bureau's electronic data contained errors. To correct the errors, the claims department had to wait until the paper claims were returned to verify each one manually. Only then could PMG compensate its providers.

As a medical claims processor, PMG is required under California law to acknowledge receipt of claims to its providers within 15 days. Given the delays associated with the scanning bureau, compliance was an ongoing challenge.

Paying healthcare providers quickly and accurately is PMG's top priority, but with this labor-intensive process, it often took more than two weeks to settle a claim — a costly endeavor for PMG. For example, if the company does not reimburse physicians on time, it is assessed interest. Therefore, employees frequently worked overtime to meet deadlines. When some providers were not paid promptly, they sent duplicate claims, which the claims department had to re-review and resend to the scanning bureau.

Furthermore, PMG is also audited regularly by health plans to ensure compliance and to verify that it was providing high-quality service to physicians. "When an auditor asked for several hundred specific claims, one of our clerks had to locate and pull the paper claims, photocopy them and then re-file the originals," said Bill Beighe, PMG's IT Director. "It was not unusual for clerks to return claims to places other than where they found them."

In 2005, PMG reevaluated its document imaging and took it in-house. It could no longer afford payment delays, compliance challenges, undue expense and stress on employees.

The Solution

After carefully considering PMG's needs, Beighe and Datacap VAR KnowledgeLake assembled an imaging system that integrates Datacap Taskmaster for Medical Claims, Microsoft SharePoint, KnowledgeLake's Imaging Server for SharePoint, and a Bowe Bell + Howell Sidekick 1400 scanner.

Sidekick was chosen for its powerful, compact, entry-level scanner for color and bi-tonal imaging and VirtualReScan™ (VRS) technology for image enhancement. The result was a desktop scanning solution that was easy to install, operate and maintain.

Today, PMG scans close to 1,000 pages each day. Within eight hours of receipt, the claims department feeds the claim into the scanner, which automatically date-stamps it. The scanning process takes a single worker two to three hours per day. In its first full year of use, the scanner provided 100 percent uptime.

Once claims are scanned, Datacap Taskmaster for Medical Claims captures claim data for payment using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and applies index values for efficient storage and retrieval in Microsoft SharePoint. PMG utilizes Taskmaster's rules-based validations to ensure maximum accuracy for fields. It does this by checking data against databases and ensuring that all fields are alpha or numeric as required.

Once data is verified as accurate, Taskmaster for Medical Claims passes data to PMG's EASYCAP adjudication system and routes claim images with the associated index values to Microsoft SharePoint for easy retrieval by the claims department. The KnowledgeLake Imaging Server software adds features and functions that are not native to Microsoft Sharepoint but enable PMG employees to access and view claims, based on permission levels. All paper claims can then be shredded to reduce storage costs.

The Result

Installed in 2006, the solution has delivered significant benefits. Claim processing cycle time has been reduced to days instead of weeks, and easy access to claims has improved customer service, since most inquiries can now be handled on the initial call.

To locate a claim, employees search PMG's secure database, using index values such as claim number, patient ID, physician name or diagnosis. The claim image is accessed quickly and seamlessly - within seconds - to enable timely answers to customer questions. Auditors can instantly find claims without clerical assistance and with easy access to database information.

The benefits of reducing paper were underscored when the company relocated its offices. With no need to store paper documents, PMG leased fewer square feet of office space. Eliminating the basement storage area also eased liability concerns about having clerks going up and down the stairs to retrieve documents.

Lastly, the imaging system enters claims information into PMG Portal, the company's secure customer website. Providers can log on to check the status and view clear images of their claims. Physicians can also review claims within one week of submission. This simple, affordable, robust application provides faster access to data, higher accuracy rates, fewer compliance concerns and more satisfied customers.



Case Study

Physicians Medical Group

About Datacap Inc.

Since 1988, Datacap Inc. has provided leading document capture and forms processing software solutions to organizations worldwide. Datacap Taskmaster software efficiently transforms paper into information, reducing data entry costs and improving information accuracy. A client/server, rules-based document capture workflow platform, Taskmaster provides highly flexible solutions for both image indexing and data entry automation. Taskmaster also enables scanning, indexing and administration from a browser and integrates with all leading document management solutions. <http://www.datacap.com/>