

IASIS HEALTHCARE®



Reveal helps new HCO get off to a flying start

Challenge

Quickly implementing a real-time, web-based report distribution and archiving system for a newly formed for-profit chain of 14 facilities in four states.

Background

IASIS Healthcare® was a gleam in investors' eyes in 1998. One year and a billion dollars later, it was a full-fledged healthcare company with 14 general, acute-care hospitals and four ambulatory surgery centers in Arizona, Florida, Texas and Utah. The facilities were purchased from two different healthcare companies—Tenet and Paracelsus. As part of the sale, IASIS acquired the personnel, the buildings, equipment and patients. Missing were important computer and information technology applications since these were proprietary systems of the former corporate parents and not included in the transactions.

"We had to meet existing service levels with new products in a hurry," says IASIS Vice President of Information Services, Sammy Cantrell. One critical need was for a centralized method to store, distribute and archive hundreds of reports for the different facilities—needed in a hurry.

Do it digitally. Let's go digital.

When the deal that created IASIS was signed, Cantrell had a big job on his hands. The previous report storage, distribution and archiving systems of the Tenet and Paracelsus facilities were either mainframe-based warhorses with limited scalability or COLD storage systems that largely served the needs of only a few facilities. Even if they had been included in the transactions, they wouldn't have functioned well in the centralized data processing environment that IASIS intended to employ, with one main data center in Phoenix handling most of the IT needs of all the separate hospitals and other facilities.

The client/server report products that at the time served the healthcare market weren't much of an improvement either, as far as IASIS was concerned. These products worked well in individual hospital environments for a limited number of users, Cantrell discovered, but extending them over the four-state-wide area network that IASIS was building would have been risky, expensive and consumed far too much bandwidth; that is, if they could have even done the job at all.

The vendors of these products weren't terribly reassuring, Cantrell recalls. And since most healthcare oriented systems on the market relied on COLD storage, they wouldn't deliver the type of functionality IASIS required, particularly when it came to letting users access ERP and spreadsheet documents with all their functionality intact.

Even worse, they also tended to be proprietary and designed to be used only with specific clinical, billing or other applications. IASIS needed something that could handle all of its applications, not just clinical and hospital reports, but corporate ERP and OLAP reports as well. When it came time to audit the new company, IASIS wanted all the information it needed in one place, instead of scattered over four different states.

"I was concerned that what we needed would be really stretching these products beyond their capabilities," Cantrell recalls. "Unfortunately, there didn't seem to be anything in the HIS market that met our needs since all their products seemed to be based on closed client/server architectures.

Luckily for Cantrell, such a solution did exist, and it was making inroads into the healthcare market. REVEAL®, an electronic report repository and web-based distribution system that had proven popular among manufacturers, finance organizations and service companies with ravenous needs.

Would it work in healthcare?

Why not with today's low-cost, web report server technology? Unlike custom-created middleware or web-programming applications that require re-engineering of existing reporting applications, the REVEAL report servers simply plug into existing infrastructures. Applications that once printed reports to paper "print" the reports electronically to the REVEAL report server. Employees log onto the REVEAL server using their web browser and access the information they need—information that's available virtually the moment it's created, instead of being upwards of a week old after it has gone through the printing and distribution process.

In addition to the required technology, REVEAL offers all the security features necessary to protect private information in virtually any way—user access can be limited to specific pages,

"What we really wanted was a centralized repository that could handle any type of application report, had a web-based front end and efficient wide area network bandwidth utilization."



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even to individual columns of information on a page. REVEAL also automatically tracks who accesses what information, so there is a complete audit trail of how information is being used. As reports are web-delivered over any browser, entire organizations can be "switched on" virtually overnight, leading to an almost unbelievable time to value.

Why REVEAL?

It was simple, says Cantrell. "The cost was much less than other solutions, the technology was right, it could be implemented fast, and it could be extended anywhere," he says. "Most REVEAL users at the time were much larger implementations than what we had in mind," he adds. "These customers had thousands of users in many different locations. Rather than stretching REVEAL's capabilities, we would be a relatively trivial implementation of it."

Talking to REVEAL customers was reassuring. "I talked to the CIO at one of their hospital reference sites, and he told me that REVEAL works like crazy," Cantrell says. "They have never had any problems with it. The web front end and other technology met their specific healthcare needs exactly. The more I learned about what REVEAL customers were doing, I realized that O'Pin Systems was way ahead of what was being provided in the HIS industry."

A Powerful message.

There are several reasons why REVEAL provided just what IASIS required. One was rapid time to value. IASIS needed a heavy-duty, centralized report distribution and access solution to replace old applications that were suddenly unavailable. REVEAL provided it. Installation took just two days. User training was accomplished through a series of 30-minute conference calls with users in the 14 hospitals, including senior hospital executives and CEOs. "Actually, it only took about 10 minutes for people to figure it out," Cantrell says. "Feedback was very positive about how fast and easy it was to find information."

The benefits in enterprise-wide productivity gains were fast in coming. With REVEAL's ability to capture and distribute reports from virtually any application, clinical reports from McKesson STARS and other healthcare applications were easily made available to users. Reports from Lawson ERP products, Hyperion and others were also delivered easily through REVEAL. "From day one, REVEAL didn't care what the application was," Cantrell says. The fact that all users have to do to access a report is point and click using their web browsers has dramatically changed the ways IASIS managers and executives use those reports, he added.

"One of the biggest examples I saw was on the financial statements," he says. "Before REVEAL, people would have to search through big binders full of statements, when all they needed was two numbers off a ledger. With REVEAL, they do a fast search, pull up the specific line they are interested in and they're done. It's considerably easier." Finding other types of information is easier as well, says Cantrell, especially at corporate headquarters. "Our corporate managers go into REVEAL, click on a report and they have the information they need for all facilities. That's a whole lot easier than having to call all the hospitals to have them fax this report or verbally provide these numbers. We've been distributing a lot of Hyperion multiform spreadsheet-based reports through REVEAL. It is one slick application when it comes to this. All you do is click on the report, and you've got the whole spreadsheet with all the calculations. They're available to our auditors, operations managers... they're out there for as long as we need them."

In fact, REVEAL proved so easy to use and so much of a time saver that requests began pouring in to put more and more reports into REVEAL, Cantrell says. "To me, that's evidence that it was the right solution."

One reason REVEAL proved so popular with executives, Cantrell explains, is the fact that it made previously intimidating application reports so much more accessible. "Some of our executives were tenuous about going into some of the core applications because that required knowing menus and executing a sequence of commands to get a particular report. They don't have to do that with REVEAL. They go into a web browser, click on one button, and there are their reports. It's almost shocking to me to see how much more they are now able to do."

In fact, as a result of REVEAL, IASIS hospital CEOs and other senior executives have received a powerful and clear message, Cantrell says. "There's no excuse for not having the information you need to manage this business effectively because it's right there at your fingertips."

It's not only senior executives who have benefitted from REVEAL. Operations managers and auditors have also found that REVEAL makes a big difference in their jobs. That became clear when IASIS did its last audit, Cantrell says. "We did not have to bother the hospitals at all. We were able to obtain all the reports and all of the data that the auditors needed for all 14 hospitals without ever picking up the phone or leaving the corporate office. Without REVEAL, the burden on the local hospitals would have been tremendous."

Bottom Line.

Cantrell estimates that the cost of ownership of REVEAL is at least 25 percent less than the healthcare-specific solutions IASIS evaluated. But cost doesn't even begin to address the main differences between REVEAL and the others, Cantrell says. "The biggest thing for me is usage. I've got executive management in each of the facilities using REVEAL. Most of them would never have gone into a transaction system to pull up a report. It's just too complicated." Cantrell is also enthusiastic about REVEAL's optional Vital Statistics feature. Not so much for its ability to track report access and usage for HIPAA compliance, but more for its broader ability to allow executives to know how report information is being used to meet the company's operational and business objectives. Example: "We want to ensure that someone in each facility's case management department looks at patient census data every single day. The report tracking tools in Vital Statistics would really help that. So I have a need for that function, but it has nothing to do with HIPAA. I have a real business need for it."

Of course, Vital Statistics can't hurt when it comes to meeting HIPAA compliance. And other features of REVEAL certainly won't be wasted as IASIS continues along its growth trajectory. REVEAL provided an easy and highly effective way to consolidate reporting distribution systems for the different facilities involved. With Reveal, healthcare companies like IASIS won't have to worry about integrating different report distribution platforms into their business or incompatibility with reporting applications. They also won't have to worry that executives don't have the information they need at their fingertips to make the right business decisions.

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