

INDEPENDENT HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION



REVEAL creates a Web-based enterprise report portal that is a win-win for HMO and thousands of its providers

Challenge

Creating a web-based, HIPAA-compliant enterprise report portal that makes secure and up-to-the minute reports available to thousands of providers and employers

Background

Independent Health Association, Inc., is consistently ranked among the top HMOs nationwide for member satisfaction. The Buffalo based HMO serves some 400,000 members and 5,000 employer groups in western New York State with 2,700 participating physicians. Since 1980, Independent Health has built a reputation for quality and dependable health care coverage, as well as for a great deal of innovation.

In the latter category, Independent Health has pioneered such products as Feeling Fit, a wellness program used in public schools and at work sites, and Custom Coverage, a line of business that offers third party administration services to employers who self-fund their employees' benefits. Other Independent Health innovations include Encompass Plus, a point-of-service product that gives freedom of choice to members, and a managed Medicare plan that offers seniors more benefits than Medicare at a lower costs.

Independent Health credits its achievements to a steadfast focus on its mission to "improve the health and well-being of the community." This includes the use of REVEAL as its enterprise reporting system for the past decade. Currently more than 700 Independent Health employees in member services, provider services, finance and other departments use REVEAL.

REVEAL not only saves Independent Health time and money on report printing and distributing. It also allows Independent Health to provide faster service and more accurate information to all of its providers and employees. Independent Health's web-based REVEAL enterprise report portal, the already sterling way it treats its providers employers will get even better.

Needed: A powerful report automation solution

Independent Health has been a REVEAL customer for many years, starting first with a version for its HP e3000 mainframe. Independent Health selected REVEAL, according to company officials, because it required a powerful solution to automate high volume reporting in a mainframe environment and distribute reports on-line. Another goal was dramatically reducing print volume and eliminating the need to microfiche reports. At the time, nothing else on the market matched REVEAL for these capabilities.

Independent Health made the transition from its mainframe to an open systems client/server environment. "We were strongly inclined to stay with REVEAL because we knew from experience that we could expect responsive service from O'Pin Systems," recalls Mike Hastings, assistant director of operations. Nonetheless, Independent Health evaluated several other report distribution solutions, including Robot Reports from Health Systems and Vista Plus from Quest.

Independent Health had more in mind than just a mainframe to client/server migration. "We wanted a lot more out of the process," says Dave Rogers, director of IT technical services. Some of the features Independent Health wanted included the ability to warehouse reports from heterogeneous platforms, handle diverse printing formats and distribute reports securely beyond the firewall. "We met with the executive team from O'PIN Systems and learned their vision for REVEAL," says Rogers. "That vision matched very closely where we wanted to go."

Destination Web

A critical strategic objective for Independent Health was to leverage web technology. Using the Internet would allow Independent Health to distribute timely reports to thousands of providers and employers and sharply reduce printing costs, "We wanted something that delivered information in an easy-to-use interface, in multiple formats to multiple users, in ways that were indexable, searchable and reproducible." Rogers says. Such a solution, however, had to provide the security to allow Independent Health to meet compliance standards set by HIPAA — however the final HIPAA regulations shaped up.

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"Everyone wants to leverage Web technologies," Rogers points out., "which is why REVEAL fit our requirements so well. It opens our ability to deliver information outside the organization. It also eliminates almost all desktop support, because we no longer have PC client software to install and deal with."

What you see is what you get

Another key issue for Independent Health was Xerox DJDE conversion support. Like many healthcare business, Independent Health had made major investments in Xerox heavy-duty, high-speed printers and needed support for Xerox's DJDE print stream technology in order to achieve digital report distribution. DJDE is a proprietary technology that overlays print streams with graphical formats that make them far more comprehensible to users and conforms to mandated formats such as UB92. O'Pin worked with Independent Health to make it possible. Along with REVEAL's support for PCL, this means Independent Health report users anywhere can access, view and print reports from their own desktops in exactly the same way they previously appeared in print. "The ability to handle all our complex print streams cleanly and easily was enormously important for us," Rogers says. "Technically it was a complex process to do this, but once again O'Pin came through."

The benefits of this include increasing Independent Health's audience for on-line reports and eliminating confusion about what information in unformatted reports means. REVEAL's ability to warehouse older report generations also makes it easier and more convenient for users to find older report generations on-line, instead of having to search for them in filing cabinets or racks. The ability to faithfully reproduce the form actually used is also an important NCQA compliance requirement solved by REVEAL.

That's not to mention the "hard" savings involved. "By delivering PCL and DJDE to the desktop via browsers we have been able to save substantially on printing, handling, shipping, couriers and storing hard copy," Rogers says.

Security and HIPAA

Looming over all of Independent Health's plans were HIPAA privacy and data security requirements. "Since HIPAA was such an huge challenge for us, we had to make sure that the enterprise reporting solution we used allows us to be absolutely sure that the person we send reports to is the person we think it is, and that they are seeing only the things they are allowed to see," says Rogers. That's why REVEAL's encryption features and its unique PinPoint distribution rules were such an added bonus. PinPoint distribution allows REVEAL administrators to limit user access to specific kinds of information, based on user security and access privileges.

"Pinpoint security allows me to access a large report with thousands of pages and yet see only the five pages that pertain to my duties," Mike Hastings points out. "Now that's secure." A related REVEAL feature that's another big benefit, says Hastings,

is REVEAL's Report Release Control Option. This allows administrators to automatically hold reports for distribution until a report's business owner approves it for release — improving overall report accuracy and avoiding the cost, rework and embarrassment of releasing erroneous information.

Bottom Line

Independent Health has chalked up big savings with REVEAL and expects even more, as providers and others outside the firewall start to take advantage of its features. Over time, as providers become more comfortable with electronic web enterprise reporting, Independent Health expects to reduce its printing and distribution costs by as much as 80 percent. While Independent Health still prints over a million pages a month, with REVEAL it expects to reduce that virtually to zero once fully implemented.

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Will providers embrace the new system? Independent Health expects that once they see how many direct benefits REVEAL provides, including improved cash flow, large hard costs savings from more efficiently managing and storing reports, and improved productivity from their office staffs, they'll enthusiastically jump on the bandwagon. In fact, larger physician organizations in Independent Health's network are already excited about the prospects of going paperless. "It's so much easier for them to find the information they need on-line," Hastings says. "It's more accurate and timely."

During Independent Health's check writing process, for example, REVEAL collects and makes available some 65,000 pages of DJDE reports on-line in minutes. Previously that information would have taken days to become available to doctors and hospitals. "The information is available on-line within minutes or hours versus a full week to get it out via courier," says Hastings. "This is really important. Billing errors can now be corrected more quickly and easily. For example, doctors can find out which claims failed our initial edits and resubmit them again within one day instead of having to wait for days to even find out about the error." That, Hastings points out, is a big service improvement with hard economic value.

In fact, providers often struggle to keep up with the expense of managed care paperwork and bureaucracy. Thanks to REVEAL, Independent Health can make a good case for actually saving — not costing — providers money. In fact, the more providers use REVEAL the more money they'll save. "That's why we expect to widen the audience and dramatically expand the number of reports that are delivered and stored in REVEAL," Hastings says. That will help Independent Health continue to lower costs, improve its bottom line, improve service, and, continue to burnish its already lustrous image. "It is hard to believe we ever got along without REVEAL" says Mike Hastings. "I can't imagine why every managed care enterprise doesn't use REVEAL. Every day they delay costs them more than they realize."

