HENNEPIN HOME HEALTH CARE FACES THE FUTURE WITH VIRTUALIZATION TECHNOLOGY FROM RED HAT

RED HAT INNOVATION AWARDS

2014 Innovation Award Winner

Home Care with A Heart

HHHC

Hennepin Home Health Care is a privately held agency that provides home-based services to elderly and mentally or physically ill clients. Located in the greater Minneapolis area, Hennepin Home Health Care's clinicians and caregivers service 1,500 to 2,000 clients annually. The 40-year old, family-owned business prides itself on providing compassionate care that helps clients maintain their integrity, independence, and choice.

Brooklyn Park, MN ●
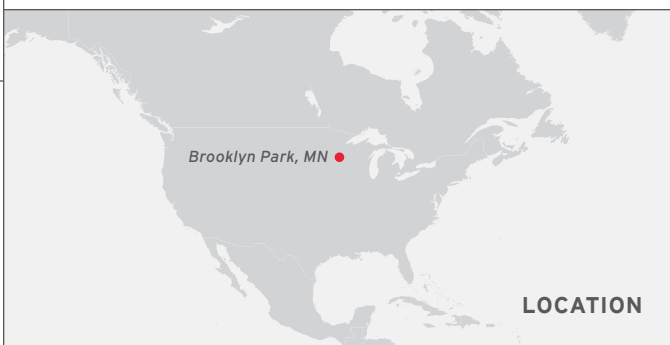
LOCATION

HEALTHCARE

CUSTOMER SINCE
2011

SOFTWARE

Red Hat® Enterprise Virtualization

Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization Hypervisor

Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization Manager

HARDWARE

Three HP ProLiant ML 150 servers

Dell EqualLogic storage area network

"With Red Hat technology and service from our partner Infrasupport, I feel we are more than ready to face the future — however we grow and whatever government mandates and industry change may come."

MARK MATA
PRESIDENT, HENNEPIN HOME HEALTH CARE

BENEFITS

• Reliable, secure, and agile technology infrastructure helps Hennepin Home Health Care meet industry mandates and grow.

• Innovative open source solutions support changing business processes, without compromising stability of IT infrastructure.

• Expert services help IT partner deploy new hardware, software, and virtualization technologies without disrupting the business.

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HENNEPIN HOME HEALTH CARE KEEPS PACE WITH INDUSTRY CHANGE

The gentle touch of knowledgeable medical professionals and caregivers has long been the most important part of delivering home healthcare services. But for Hennepin Home Health Care, a leading service provider based in Brooklyn Park, MN, sophisticated technology systems are the secret weapon that keeps the business running smoothly and profitably.

Founded in 1974, Hennepin Home Health Care employs nurses, health aides, therapists, and other caregivers to provide in-home services to people in the Minneapolis area. Each year the family-owned company cares for 1,500 to 2,000 clients who are elderly, physically or mentally ill, and young patients who have an ailment or medical condition.

Despite its four decades of success, Hennepin Home Health Care faced changing and complex marketplace challenges. Insurers were switching to computerized systems, federal regulations were changing, medical records required privacy, and the Affordable Care Act demanded accountability. Hennepin's legacy IT systems struggled to support the business.

"A few years ago, we switched to electronic billing, and by next year we'll be forced to maintain data electronically and eliminate paper records," said Mark Mata, president, Hennepin Home Health Care. "In the near future, clinicians may record patient data on handheld devices. But IT is not what we were built for. Our nurses and therapists provide excellent care, but our knowledge of the computer world is another thing."

The company prides itself on treating clients with respect and creating a people-centered work environment. Equally important, however, is the need to support precise financial record-keeping that helps the company maintain profitability. For example, Medicare and other government organizations frequently audit billing records to determine whether providers have been overpaid. "If we are paid to care for a client and we can't provide the data requested by an audit, Medicare actually can take the money back," said Amelia Mata, CEO, Hennepin Home Health Care.

RED HAT VIRTUALIZATION SOLUTIONS OFFER AFFORDABLE RELIABILITY

Originally built on two aging servers, Hennepin Home Health Care's IT infrastructure was in critical condition. Greg Scott, CTO of IT services company Infrasupport Corporation—a Red Hat® partner—provides on-site IT services to Hennepin Home Health Care. "Acting as Hennepin's IT department, I could see that the infrastructure was due for an upgrade," he explained. "People had trouble logging in and accessing the data and forms they needed."

Hennepin Home Health Care's owners agreed with the need for a technology update. "Reliability, security, and agility are three important factors for our success," said Mark Mata. "Our software, databases, and billing must be flawless and the connectivity must be always-on. If the system goes down, we can't just close the office. We have vulnerable people who need care 24x7."

Scott suggested that the company consider implementing virtualized servers that could provide redundancy and reliability in case of failure. Hennepin Home Health Care wanted to find an affordable virtualization solution that could be implemented without disrupting the business. "The infrastructure had to be right so that Hennepin Home Health Care can provide the services that clients depend on," said Scott. "That's when we made the decision to use open source solutions and we turned to Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization. Red Hat has the software to make this work, affordably."

Hennepin Home Health Care bought and installed three new servers and a storage area network (SAN), along with Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization, Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization Hypervisor, and Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization Manager. Scott structured the system so that the virtual disk images reside in the SAN and incorporated multiple uninterruptible power supplies.

The project had two phases, a seamless physical to virtual phase, followed by an application virtual machine upgrade. "Users went home on Friday, and by Monday morning, the new virtual environment was up and running. To users, it was the same as the old physical environment," said Scott. This set up the environment for application upgrades with new versions of Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Exchange running as virtual machine guests in the Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization environment.

A RELIABLE, SECURE, AGILE SOLUTION

To meet its mission of providing compassionate care, Hennepin Home Health Care needed highly available technology solutions that can also protect data and grow with the business. "Servers must work around the clock, and there are ethical boundaries you don't cross with patient data," said Scott. "Hennepin Home Health Care is larger than it was when the Matas took over in 2004. All we know about the future is that it will be different than today, and we need an I.T. solution that can scale and adapt."

The Red Hat solution offered availability, data protection, and scalability. "With Red Hat, Hennepin deployed a solution that was reliable and secure and agile," he added. "When the world changes, we need technology that will allow us to change with it. We got all that and more with Red Hat."

STABLE, INNOVATIVE OPEN SOURCE TECHNOLOGY

Knowing that Red Hat products are based on open source technology gave Hennepin Home Health Care confidence. They knew they were deploying the most innovative solutions on the market – without compromising stability. "I've had a long history working with Red Hat solutions, and it's all positive," said Scott. "Done right, open source means the smartest people around the world are collaborating on technology. Then Red Hat takes the best of the best and supports it. For me, that eliminates all the arguments for proprietary solutions."

The result is a technology foundation that supports forward-thinking business practices. "Here in this small business, we're doing some things that Fortune 500 companies don't know how to do yet," said Scott. "We are mixing traditional people skills with some of the most sophisticated high-tech stuff on the planet, and we're doing it successfully. That's what innovation is all about."

FASTER IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH SERVICES EXPERTISE

During every phase of the implementation project, Scott relied on services from Red Hat. "When we executed the physical to virtual migrations, I used some tools that were new," said Scott. "I depended heavily on Red Hat services to help me debug tools and complete the migration. The support team and some of the developers taught me and guided me through the process."

A FOUNDATION FOR SERVICE – AND FOR THE FUTURE

Developing a partnership with Red Hat and Infrasupport has helped Hennepin Home Health Care adapt to changing industry and government requirements, quickly and affordably. "Our clients don't see what happens in the office," said Amelia Mata. "They only know that they are well-cared for in their homes. Through our new infrastructure, we've created a reliable environment that supports a positive cash flow and a successful business. With the Red Hat solutions, we know our systems will be ready to support our processes so we can care for our clients."

Looking ahead, Mark Mata expects Hennepin Home Health Care to continue embracing new technologies that help the company provide better service. In the coming years, field-based caregivers will shift from handwritten documents to mobile devices, such as tablets or notebooks, that can access the database remotely.

"We may find ourselves using videoconferencing or other technologies right in our clients' homes," said Mark Mata. "It's important that we be able to adapt to whatever the government and the industry requires. We are already one of the leading service providers in our area. Embracing innovative technology from Red Hat will help us grow and deliver even better service to our clients."

Recognizing that change is a constant in the healthcare industry, Hennepin Home Health Care feels its new technology infrastructure gives the organization a solid foundation for success. "With Red Hat technology and service from our partner Infrasupport, I feel we are more than ready to face the future—however we grow and whatever government mandates and industry change may come," said Mark Mata.
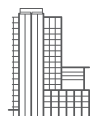
ABOUT RED HAT

Red Hat is the world's leading provider of open source solutions, using a community-powered approach to provide reliable and high-performing cloud, virtualization, storage, Linux, and middleware technologies. Red Hat also offers award-winning support, training, and consulting services. Red Hat is an S&P company with more than 70 offices spanning the globe, empowering its customers' businesses.

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