

Making HIPAA Look Easy While Increasing Efficiency

Overview

Today's stringent compliance requirements of HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), the law which was enacted by Congress to protect the health insurance rights of workers and their families, has put health organizations on notice for providing enhanced security to patients personal records. There was a time when you could walk into a hospital emergency room and find patient records opened on a computer screen for all to see. Now with the enactment of HIPAA, those days are over. It could potentially be a major liability to the organization should it ever happen. Many hospitals that are compliant today are still looking for ways to enhance the security of their employee and patient records.

Problem

Most, if not all healthcare facilities have made the transition from analog record keeping to digital. The University of Colorado Hospital, one of the nation's top ranked facilities, is no different and after making the transition discovered that with compliance came operational difficulties. The doctors and nurses often roamed the hospital and were having serious issues gaining access to the network from multiple workstations throughout the facility. The staff also found themselves having to maintain multiple passwords and often forgot them. Additionally logging into and out of sessions on the workstations was becoming a drain on their precious time. The problems they were experiencing were straightforward. The solution on the other hand required a company that understood the unique dynamic of signing onto any workstation throughout the hospital, while maintaining security and integrity of a network that conforms to HIPAA.

Solution

With over 13 years of industry experience RF IDEas was able to bring a cost effective and comprehensive solution to the hospital that exceeded management's expectations. The plan called for using the ID badges currently issued to the employees for building access to be used as a way to log onto the secured data network of the hospital. With the use of the pcProx® Enroll, pcProx Sonar device and the single sign on software (SSO) by HealthCast know as eXactACCESS, RF IDEas developed a solution that would allow employees to sign on and off of workstations throughout the facility. The pcProx products are manufactured by RF IDEas and are true plug-n-play USB driven making installation as easy as plugging in a keyboard.



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Results

After the hardware and software were installed, the hospital immediately recognized how the new system had enhanced their compliance with the privacy act. The staff found it much easier to log on and off workstations throughout the facility and didn’t have to worry about remembering passwords to do so. They could login just by waving their building access badge over any workstation outfitted with pcProx Enroll. The way it works is the reader takes the badge information and passes it to the SSO software which gives them access to the network. In addition, they are taken to the exact place within the last application they had opened no matter which workstation they log back in on. “What’s really nice about our SSO system is that you just input one password with your user ID and it allows you to go into the various applications from anywhere,” said Shelly Limon, a nursing manager at the University of Colorado Hospital. “Whereas before if I moved from one location to another I’d have to remember all my different usernames and passwords. Sometimes that gets a little frustrating on my part, because I change my passwords all the time”, added Limon. In addition to automatic logon, when a user gets up to walk away the screen goes blank, the session ends and the computer will lock. This happens with the use of the pcProx Sonar device mounted on the top of the monitor.

Benefit

With the new system consisting of RF IDEas’ pcProx, pcProx Sonar and HealthCasts’ eXactACCESS single sign on software, the University of Colorado Hospital not only achieved its goal of resolving the previous systems inefficiencies but realized additional benefits as well. The number one issue of logging into the network from anywhere within the hospital was resolved. In addition, where it was once required for personnel to pick several passwords for log on, they now only require one and it’s controlled by the IT department making for much stronger authentication. The IT department pointed out that one of the weakest links in its network security had been resolved. They said that selection of ultra-simple passwords by employees made the system vulnerable to login by unauthorized users, something the new system cured. The hospital was also seeing additional contribution from a badge system once purchased for door access only and thought obsolete. As for the staff, they are more efficient and can respond quicker to emergencies while still being HIPAA compliant. Productivity increased since file access with the new system brings you to exactly where you left off in your last session. Overall a simple upgrade to a door badge system became a huge asset to the hospital thanks to the unique approach of RF IDEas.

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