Maintaining Essential Worker Health Through Contact Tracing

In the midst of a global pandemic, the one place you'd expect to find sick people is in a healthcare facility. A major U.S. healthcare provider took a proactive step toward identifying those individuals who showed symptoms before they entered the workplace.

With a simple tap of an ID badge, the healthcare provider's staff could verify their personal well-being as they entered each building. This self identification helped to keep potentially symptomatic workers at home, while ensuring those on premise had been screened and the event logged—a huge step toward preventing viral spread.

Here's how rf IDEAS® and partner World Wide Technology (WWT) introduced and deployed this robust attendance tracking solution in a fraction of the time expected and to thousands of employees—all to keep these essential workers and their patients as safe as possible even as case infection rates rose across the country.

THE CHALLENGE

Employees pose a serious health risk when they come to work with symptoms

Healthcare workers are some of the most dedicated of any industry. Unfortunately, during a global pandemic, the heroic attitudes that keep them by their patients' sides even when they're not feeling well can have serious consequences.

With hundreds of thousands of employees entering the workplace daily, one major healthcare provider couldn't question every single employee, every shift, every day, individually, to prevent viral spread. Yet, the provider also couldn't simply permit these workers to come and go.

In addition, with a pandemic at full swing, time was of the essence. Any solution had to be designed and deployed at an accelerated pace. The healthcare provider's IT group needed a solution in a few weeks versus months.

The challenge was to influence good behavior by holding essential workers accountable for their own healthy status. The concept was that each arriving essential worker would confirm, "I am healthy. I have no symptoms. I have not been exposed to symptoms." whenever they arrived for their shift.

Of course, even a shortened health screening or use of a complicated software app would consume hours of productive time, and cause a cluster of workers at entry points which is not beneficial during a pandemic.

So how do you create an environment of trust while seamlessly processing tens of thousands of entries every single day? The rf IDEAS/WWT team put together the answer.

THE SOLUTION

An integrated TAP+KNOW™ attendance tracking solution with WWT software and WAVE ID® Plus readers

WAVE ID® Plus

The most feature-rich offering from rf IDEAS, the WAVE ID Plus dual-frequency card reader is ideal for critical applications in healthcare and beyond.

Features
- Delivers card ID in formats that multiple applications recognize
- Standard four card configurations
- Ideal for enrollment into third-party software or single sign-on integrators
- 13.56 MHz auto-tuning ensures optimal power transfer to avoid interference

Benefits
- Delivers a wide array of user identification, authentication and contact tracing applications
- Simultaneously reads proximity and contactless card technologies
- Customizable for any card solution, anywhere
- Eliminates error associated with individual identification and manual entry

Taking into account the healthcare provider's dispersed locations, its tens of thousands of entries each day, its need to deploy and train users, and the extreme time constraints brought on by the pandemic, the rf IDEAS/WWT team worked quickly and collaboratively on an implementation plan that was simple, seamless and allowed IT to drive decisions around user experience.

At the heart of the solution are WAVE ID Plus readers connected to simple tablet devices that are accessed via lobby kiosks. According to WWT's Matthew Stein, a user-friendly solution was paramount, which is why a credential reader was selected over alternative options like a smartphone app.

"Every user knows how to scan a badge. They do it every day, 40 times a day, every time they enter a door," Stein notes. "So when you think about, 'Should the complexity be on the user side or should the complexity be on the IT side?' I think everybody in IT would rather have the complexity on their side to make it easy on the user. That is one of the reasons why this tablet-based solution has been so appealing at this healthcare company."

The solution not only saves time on a daily basis, it saves the organization countless hours of employee training, too. In fact, more than 250,000 users were trained in just two weeks. As Stein says, "It was a less than five-minute training."

All employees had to do was answer the simple screening questions and every time they tap credentials to enter the facility, they attest to their own health (i.e. no symptoms, no contact with anyone who is symptomatic).

This puts the responsibility for any potential outbreaks on each employee versus the vast organization itself—an important consideration for its human resources and legal departments.

What this means is if an employee tapped in and later tests positive, the personal responsibility is on him or her rather than on the organization.

The simplicity of the technology and the transparency of employees' health combine to provide a first line of defense across all 800 facilities.

rf IDEAS

THE RESULTS

Seamless, contactless data collection with the swipe of a credential/ID badge

By the Numbers

4 Weeks from Ideation
to Deployment of Solution

800 Unique Sites

15 Business Days to Deploy

270,000 People Scanned
in the First Week

370,000 Average Weekly
Scans

3.5 Million Individuals Scanned
(Dec. 2020 to Feb. 2021)

The solution not only saves time on a daily basis, it saves the organization. Today, this major healthcare provider has a fully operational attendance tracking and contact tracing solution with safety and infection mitigation at its core. Key benefits include:

Enhanced Productivity
Less time spent in manual sign-ins and fewer errors means more hours spent taking care of patients or managing productive tasks.

Streamlined Data Collection
Date, time and employee name is collected via a single tap and this data is sent to a SQL database for simple reference by security, legal, HR or whoever needs clarity on who's been in the building.

Minimal Training
Because everyone understands how to tap a credential, no specialized training or UX studies were necessary. In an organization with 250,000-plus employees, this is significant savings in time and productivity.

Rapid Deployment
The simplicity of the solution allowed a single WWT technician to install an average of seven to eight tablet-based kiosks each day. The net result was 800 kiosks installed in just 15 business days.

Robust Performance
Across all locations, the software and readers performed flawlessly. In fact, only two issues were reported in the first two months after deployment and these were dropped tablets.

Proof of Compliance
The solution allows the healthcare provider to achieve both PCI and HIPAA compliance within just a couple weeks.

For more application information,
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