

Healthcare provider taps into game-changing technology

Hackensack Meridian Health transforms with Citrix

Unconventional solutions for larger-than-life IT challenges

“Sometimes we find ourselves having to be extremely inventive – ‘MacGyvering’ solutions rather than using traditional IT strategies,” explains Mark Eimer, SVP, associate CIO & CTO - information technology services, Hackensack Meridian Health (HMH).

“MacGyvering a solution” is a term that hails back to a television show in which the main character, Angus MacGyver, routinely used everyday items to do the unthinkable. Like MacGyver, Eimer and his team thrive on designing unconventional and innovative solutions to solve the large-scale compute problems that plague the healthcare industry.

Secure consistent operations

The team’s goal is to do things better, faster, smarter, and more economically – yet in a secure, consistent way. Their most recent mechanism is a hybrid cloud, multi-cloud IT solution. For each cloud, there is a use case. While a few workloads run on Microsoft Azure, the majority of use cases are Google Cloud-based.

Migrations from Microsoft Office 365 to Google Workspace and from Windows desktops to Chrome devices are currently underway. The team are building out a Google Cloud environment for their data analytics platform and a Citrix Virtual Desktop environment with DaaS capabilities. The solution has the flexibility to deliver apps and data to anyone at any time. Also, thanks to the new technology, Hackensack Meridian Health have reduced their real estate footprint significantly.

By the end of 2023, Eimer and his team expect to have reached 98% completion of the initiative to migrate the hospital system’s entire workforce to Google Workspace and Google Chrome plus Citrix.



Hackensack
Meridian Health

Industry
Healthcare

Location
New Jersey, USA

Citrix products

- Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops
- Citrix DaaS

A great employee experience

The team understand the business value of a great employee experience. “We’re in the middle of building out a Citrix HDX environment so that we can offer a better user experience through the Citrix platform,” Eimer says. “We will incorporate Progressive Web Apps (PWAs) – from Citrix right onto the Chrome OS desktop. From an end-user compute perspective, we don’t believe that there’s another organization doing exactly what we’re doing,” Eimer continues.

Game-changing technology

Citrix technology was first implemented in 2008, just before Hackensack University Medical Center merged with Meridian Health. In the same year, the healthcare system began using Epic electronic health records (EHR). Since that time, Citrix has been the standard for application delivery and Epic has been the default app for EHRs.

To ensure security, consistency, and scalability across the system’s 17 hospitals, Hackensack Meridian Health have leveraged the partnership between Citrix and Google since March 2020. Not only has the hybrid cloud, multi-cloud technology solution empowered clinicians and staff to effectively deliver patient care, but also, it has resulted in cost reductions and helped increase efficiency.

“Citrix has been a game-changer from the moment COVID-19 hit in March 2020,” Eimer exclaims. He and his team quickly enabled 3,000 employees to remote work; they were equipped with Chromebooks loaded with Citrix.

“Today, we work in a hybrid cloud model,” he relates. “We’re giving clinicians a platform that enables them to deliver superior patient care from any location.” The new platform is lighter, faster, and more secure.

Centralized management

The Chrome OS platform gives the team a central management console. Every time a new Chrome OS device is enrolled, it is automatically managed and seamlessly consolidated onto one dashboard. This simple management mode has made it very easy for Eimer and his team to deploy over 6,000 Chrome OS devices. To date, 31,000 Hackensack Meridian Health staff members have been migrated to digital workspace technology.

“This type of Citrix and Google platform gives Hackensack Meridian Health – and for that matter, organizations in the healthcare industry in general – a competitive edge in efficiently and effectively delivering patient care,” Eimer says.

“We know that not all healthcare applications work well in the cloud, which is why we’re not out of the data center business entirely,” he continues, “but there is value in moving many apps -- by use case -- to the cloud. Doing so gives us better security and more flexibility in how we deliver apps to clinicians.”

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Associate CIO & CTO -
Information Technology Services
Hackensack Meridian Health**

An effective technology partnership

Hackensack Meridian's new end-user computing model for workplace productivity capitalizes on a long list of great technology: Google Chromebooks or Chromeboxes, Chrome OS, a data analytics platform; [Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops](#) and predictive health analytics. Add tap-and-go and the published electronic health records (EHR) platform, Epic. Microsoft Azure and Google are the cloud providers for the hybrid cloud, multi-cloud environment. Multifactor authentication ensures that only authorized users can access patients' protected health information (PHI).

"With Chromebooks and Citrix, we've been able to achieve several hybrid work models with one solution. We accommodate three groups: fully remote employees, those who prefer hybrid work, and staff members who work on-site," says Eimer.

To onboard new employees, the team simply sends Chromebooks to employees, or they deliver them to onsite workers. New users can be up and running within minutes of receipt of equipment.

Not only does Hackensack Meridian Health use Virtual Apps and Desktops from Citrix, but the organization is in the early stages of adopting Citrix Cloud and Citrix Desktop as a Service (DaaS). [Citrix DaaS](#) is a cloud computing offering that securely delivers virtual apps and desktops from the cloud to any device.

Partnership extends to support

Hackensack Meridian Health are also capitalizing on Citrix priority support. Eimer is quick to point out, "When we run into situations that negatively impact patient care, having priority support is crucial," he says. "The ability to have individual cell numbers for our Citrix and Google account managers so we can escalate a problem is incredibly valuable for Hackensack Meridian Health."

Security and mitigating cybercrime risk

Healthcare environments are constantly targeted by cybercriminals. By partnering with Citrix and Google, Hackensack Meridian Health found a solution that mitigates those cybercrime risks. The team implemented multifactor authentication so that whether a user is inside the four walls of the hospital, or working from home, that person is working on a secure, modern platform that most cyber criminals cannot penetrate. The team have already seen compelling results with their new platform: a 30% reduction in spam received via the email system, and 10% faster login times on the Chromebooks clinical workstations use case. The environment has multiple layers of defense, and the Google plus Citrix platform with Chromebooks is just one component of the secure environment. Clinicians can focus on patient care rather than on security or on hunting for electronic health records.

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The evolution continues

The work that Eimer and his team have been doing at HMH has driven a culture change for employees, doctors, and other healthcare workers. “As you can imagine, employees spend long periods of time doing things one way and processes get hardwired. We’ve worked to change how people think about solving problems,” Eimer concludes.

The hospital system is doing just as the legendary MacGyver did: continuing to invent new ways to address technology challenges as they arise. Stay tuned for more episodes to come!

About Hackensack Meridian Health

Headquartered in Edison, New Jersey, Hackensack Meridian Health are the largest integrated delivery network and hospital system in New Jersey. It is comprised of 17 hospitals, 36,000 employees, and more than 500 patient centers or locations across New Jersey. The health system includes four academic medical centers, a school of medicine, and a research institute.

Enterprise Sales

North America | 800-424-8749

Worldwide | +1 408-790-8000

Locations

Corporate Headquarters | 851 Cypress Creek Road, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309, United States

Silicon Valley | 4988 Great America Parkway, Santa Clara, CA 95054, United States

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