



University of Malaya Specialist Centre reduces operational costs and boosts efficiencies using Google Apps Premier Edition



At a Glance

What they wanted to do:

- Upgrade collaboration and communication tools without significant capital outlay
- Equip clinicians and managers with holistic view into business data, both on computers and Android devices
- Accelerate business processes
- Safeguard patient information

What they did:

- Built new infrastructure with Google Apps as a basis
- Integrated Google Apps with back-end systems to provide cohesive information view

What they accomplished:

- Increased operational efficiencies
- Accelerated collaboration
- Supported highly mobile workforce
- Virtually nixed capital expenditures related to communication tools
- Secured patient data

Business

The University of Malaya Specialist Centre (UMSC) is a private wing of the University Malaya Medical Center (UMMC) in Malaysia. The facility provides personalised attention to patients and gives specialists at the public University of Malaya Hospital a chance to participate in the private medical care business. "UMSC provides a powerful incentive to retain top medical talent within the public sector by providing a blended public/private model," explains Dr. HM Goh, UMSC Medical Director.

Challenge

To deliver quality medical service and operate efficiently, 200 employees at the facility must share medical information, financial data, and general information such as schedules. Traditionally, UMSC operated using paper based documents and offline non-collaborative flat files on platforms such as Microsoft Office. When Goh and Leon Jackson, IT Manager for UMSC, joined the organisation, they saw an opportunity to add value to the business.

"I came from a consulting firm specialising in healthcare informatics," says Jackson. "While there, we shut down our Microsoft Exchange servers and deployed Google Apps and Postini for email management and security – a switch that resulted in tangible operational efficiencies and cost savings. When we joined UMSC in 2009 to revamp its IT infrastructure, we saw that Google Apps could do the same here."

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—Dr. HM Goh, UMSC Medical Director

Goh and Jackson had several priorities in mind with Google Apps, including avoiding the high infrastructure costs, extensive maintenance, and personnel resources required to operate on-premise email servers. "We wanted to amortise our communications tools as services, minimizing capital outlays," says Goh. Their priorities went beyond email. They also wanted to integrate UMSC's collaboration tools with hospital information and financial systems. The goal was to coalesce information from various back-end systems into intuitive, shared front-end tools, alleviating the need to jump from system to system to obtain pieces of data.

"The vision is for financial data, status of hospital beds, schedules, rosters, and other vital information to flow seamlessly from back-end systems into front-end communication and collaboration tools, with everyone able to provide real-time input," says Goh. "Imagine using a shared spreadsheet to see which patients have not paid from the day before, or allowing clinicians to view everyone's schedules on their Android devices. That's the kind of business transformation we wanted to achieve."

About Google Apps

Google Apps is an enterprise-ready suite of applications that includes Gmail, Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Docs and Spreadsheets (online document hosting and collaboration), Google Sites (team site creation and publishing), and Google Video* (easy, secure sharing of video content).

*Google Video is not available in all countries

For more information visit:
www.google.com/a

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—Dr. HM Goh, UMSC Medical Director*

Above all, Goh and Jackson had to find a solution that would safeguard the confidentiality of patient information, whether it was sent by email or shared online in a document. "We deal with sensitive information that must be kept private at every moment, regardless of how it is disseminated or shared," says Jackson.

Goh and the team also felt that they could not take full advantage of communication and collaboration tools without making the information available on both computers and mobile devices. "Managers and physicians here are all big Android users," says Goh. "Physicians in particular are all on the move caring for patients. None of us can be tethered to a desktop computer, yet we still need access to operational and patient information wherever we are."

Solution

UMSC worked with Google Apps Solution Provider Matrix Connexion to deploy Google Apps Premier Edition with ease and efficiency. "We weren't replacing any technologies or migrating off of any other email system, so we simply turned on Google Apps," says Jackson. "Our help desk employees provided assistance when it was needed, but no one required formal training." Today, UMSC offers Gmail accounts to all 200 staff members, from managers and clinicians who use email heavily, to nurses who may only work a few hours a day. Seventy employees use Google Docs and Google Spreadsheets to share information such as the status of beds and patient accounts. They use Google Calendar to coordinate schedules and Google Sites to share documents and corporate information.

"Google provides a powerful, easy-to-deploy option for everything from coordinating roster lists to collaborating through shared calendars that feed into each other," says Goh. "Google Apps has quickly become the backbone of our daily communications. We also use Google Sites extensively for project management and as a cloud-based file storage facility."

All of this functionality is available to employees using computers or mobile devices. And all of the information is kept secure through message security in Postini, and the security safeguards of Google's network of data centres. "In the U.S., medical organisations have to comply with stringent HIPAA requirements, and many of them rely on Google Apps," says Jackson. "With the paid versions of Google Apps, Google is contractually bound to protect information privacy. We were impressed with the high level of privacy standards Google upholds."

Results

UMSC reports a range of benefits that they've realized with Google Apps. By outsourcing its communication and collaboration tools to Google, UMSC is avoiding the high capital expenditures it would face using an in-house infrastructure. "The cost of our IT infrastructure has plummeted so much that it doesn't even appear in our capital expenditure accounts," says Goh. "We amortise this portion of IT as services – and we have saved a tremendous amount in the form of IT headcount. We have about eight IT staff members, while with on-premise options, we would need to have an IT army."

UMSC also runs more smoothly since adopting Google Apps. From managers to clinicians, information consolidated from a variety of systems is presented in shared spreadsheets on computers or Android devices, keeping everyone coordinated. "Google Apps is my operational lifeline," Goh concludes. "It's where I coordinate and collaborate every minute. We are big believers in the cloud and in Google Apps. We are running much more efficiently, and the turnaround time for all of our business processes has accelerated significantly."

