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### Skagit Valley Hospital Optimum Patient Care Using Intelligent Communication Networks

Mount Vernon, Washington rests in the fertile valley of the Skagit River, about 60 miles north of Seattle. Over 120,000 people live in Mount Vernon and the surrounding area of Skagit County. Skagit Valley Hospital is a full-care facility that has been serving these communities since 1958. The hospital's 1,200 employees share one vision: to be the best regional community hospital in the Northwest. Their collective mission is to serve with compassion and dignity, one patient at a time.

#### A Vision of Patient Care Excellence

In their desire to provide optimum patient care, the staff at Skagit Valley Hospital recognized the need to address the communication gap between professional hospital staff (especially nurses,) doctors, and patients. Because doctors and nurses often change locations at a moment's notice, locating them in a timely manner was challenging. The traditional methods of using a paging system and telephones to reach doctors, convey information to nurses and then to patients proved an inefficient use of resources and time. Not only was it frustrating for staff, it did not best serve the patients.

The goal at Skagit Valley Hospital was to enhance the communication between



doctors and patients, and in the process, improve the quality of care. This demanded immediate response times among patients and staff, accessibility of all staff, (including doctors) and a method for patients to speak directly with their caregiver even from their hospital bed.

#### Paging a Solution, STAT

The Vocera Communications Badge from Vocera Communications Inc. is a wearable device that allows hands-free, instant voice communication. Weighing less than two ounces, users can wear it on a lanyard or clip it to a shirt pocket. It makes instant two-way voice conversations easy and convenient by eliminating the need for phone numbers or handsets. Badges are unique to each wearer and recognize

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individuals' voices. They are as simple to use as saying, "Conference charge nurse and pharmacy," or "Call Doctor Smith."

The badges were first used on a trial basis in the Emergency Room at the hospital, the legacy wireless network prevented them from functioning in the operating rooms or outside the hospital. The badges were popular among users, but they needed to work to their full potential, everywhere in the hospital. If they could solve that problem, the staff knew it would go a long way toward healing their communication issues.

### **Closing the Communication Gap**

Skagit Valley Hospital needed to deploy a network solution that would not disrupt their critical care services. They also wanted more than just a hardware installation. They wanted a value added reseller that would design and develop a solution just right for them and provide ongoing technical support. Enter Leverage Information Systems, a premier wireless systems integrator with extensive Vocera communications expertise.

As a first step, Leverage performed a detailed network assessment to analyze the hospital's core needs and services. Doug Riley, Director of Information Systems at Skagit Valley Hospital, has been pleased with what Leverage helped them accomplish. "With the wireless work that we did on our core, they were

great—providing resources that were knowledgeable and skilled in what we needed to do. We had great designers at Leverage. No complaints at all; they were just fantastic through the whole process."

As the hospital's one point of contact, Leverage coordinated multiple vendors behind the scenes. The value added reseller also ensured that the impact to daily operations was minimal. Their solution merges a Cisco Systems network with the Dukane ProCare 6000 healthcare communication system, the Emergin Gateway, and the Vocera instant voice communication system. As part of their turnkey solution, Leverage ensured long-term success by providing no-fault support. Following an expanded 60-day pilot program, Leverage integrated Vocera with the existing phone system. This enabled the hospital staff to communicate with offsite doctors' offices. After the successful completion of that phase, Leverage expanded the network to the entire hospital, and later, to a newly added building.

"There are a lot of times when IT is just seen as a commodity," says Riley. "But this was an example of where we were able to get out in front with a valuable technology tool. We ended up looking really good through the implementation of this technology."

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### **Seamless Integration**

When asked how the new system has impacted her nursing staff, Jan Iverson, Chief Nurse Executive doesn't hesitate. "I honestly think they couldn't live without it. It really is a great tool." Not only has the quality of patient care improved, morale among staff has also surged. Because they can now better serve their patients, and frustrations with the old paging system and its associated noise are in the past, the staff feels more positive about their efforts. Staff efficiency has increased and buy-in has been enormous.

Another benefit to the new system has been the reduced need for cell phones which can experience limited reception and drop outs. Vocera badges make it possible for staff to roam throughout any of the hospital facilities without losing communication with one another. The badges will work even during power outages and their ease of use has unburdened an already overworked IT staff.

The wireless infrastructure implemented by Leverage makes future communication possibilities for Skagit Valley Hospital almost limitless. Enhanced bedside services and RFID applications are just some of the options available as the hospital grows. As part of their planned expansion, the network will add non-critical areas such as engineering and facilities.

### ***Leverage Information Systems***

Leverage designs reliable and scalable surveillance solutions to meet the increasing demands to improve public safety. They understand the importance of maximizing existing infrastructure while planning to meet future system requirements. Leverage is also an industry leader for complete Unified Communications, networking solutions, structured cabling, network storage, wireless infrastructure, and information security (INFOSEC) through engineering, operations, and maintenance management across all of our customer verticals.

With our broad clientele, ranging from Federal government and public sector customers to Healthcare, Education and Small-Medium Businesses, Leverage Information Systems serves clients throughout the United States, Europe, and the Pacific Theatre.

### **For more information, please contact us**

Toll Free at 800.825.6680 or visit our dedicated Healthcare website at [www.healthcare.leverageis.com](http://www.healthcare.leverageis.com)