

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY:
SAN FRANCISCO HEALTH
PLAN

San Francisco Health Plan helps more people access affordable healthcare by simplifying IT management.



Customer Profile

Industry: Healthcare
Company: San Francisco
Health Plan
Income: \$100,000,000
Employees: 90

Business Impact Summary

Business:

San Francisco Health Plan provides medical care to more than 50,000 low-income residents as well as a quarter of the city's children. The City-sponsored health plan operates four key insurance programs aimed at families, children and In-Home Support Services workers.

Challenge:

To increase the number of people it helps, San Francisco Health Plan must ensure that as many resources as possible are directed at developing new programs and servicing its members. At the same time, the organization must ensure it is responsive to change, maintains regulation compliance while continuously processing large quantities of electronic transactions.

Solution:

To ensure that the organization is running at optimum efficiency, San Francisco Health Plan has adopted an integrated and automated approach to Enterprise IT Management. This reduces the required resources needed for key IT processes, such as Dynamic & Virtual Systems Management, Threat Management, Change & Configuration Management and Incident & Problem Management.

Result:

San Francisco Health Plan has been able to achieve a lower staffing ratio and reduce capital expenditure, while enhancing compliance and minimizing risk. As a result, more resources can be directed at its primary concern: helping the people of San Francisco access affordable healthcare.

Business

A Health Plan made by and for San Franciscans

San Francisco Health Plan has a single purpose: to provide high quality medical care to the largest number of low-income residents in the city as possible. Since the first member enrolled in 1997, San Francisco Health Plan has expanded its services to cover more than 50,000 people including a quarter of the city's children.

The City-sponsored health plan operates four key programs aimed at families, children and In-Home Support Services and low-income workers. With 25 percent of the city's 750,000 population falling below the federal poverty line, this organization plays a vital role in providing access to affordable health care and improving the quality of life.

Challenge

Reaching new groups in the community

San Francisco Health Plan is constantly trying to expand the number of people that it serves, and over the next three years hopes to encourage more people to sign up to affordable insurance schemes. As Donald Gordon, Chief Information Officer of the San Francisco Health Plan, explains, "There is a huge under class of people who pay cash for healthcare services. This can become a very expensive proposition if someone is hurt in a car crash or diagnosed with an illness which requires a lifetime of medication."

Promoting insurance plans to new groups and communities in the city requires not only innovation but also flexibility. The healthcare sector is very dynamic, with regulations, medications, procedures and doctors changing every year. "At least five new state laws are passed every year plus there's federal statutes, such as HIPPA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act], which impact our organization," explains Gordon.

Investing money where it's needed most

Despite having to cope with a constantly evolving landscape, San Francisco Health Plan is keen to ensure that critical funds are not absorbed by operational expenses. "We try to spend as little money as possible on administrative overhead, preferring to focus our resources on provisioning healthcare for our members," says Gordon.

However, as a transaction-based organization, achieving this goal is no easy task. "Although developing new healthcare solutions is a primary goal, we must also ensure the efficient administration of our existing programs," comments Gordon. "This means we have to process a range of transactions that help our members navigate the healthcare system — from enrolments and eligibility evaluations to issuing identity cards and administering claims."

Ninety-eighty percent of transactions come in and out of San Francisco Health Plan electronically — as does the payment of the majority claims, which total between \$12 and \$15 million each year. "The entire transaction flow from a financial and operational perspective is very important," states Gordon. "If these processes break down, we are unable to solve our members' problems and that is our primary aim."

"The entire transaction flow from a financial and operational perspective is very important. If these processes break down, we are unable to solve our members' problems and that is our primary aim."

Donald Gordon,
Chief Information Officer of the
San Francisco Health Plan

With such a heavy reliance on technology, San Francisco Health Plan must be confident that its IT infrastructure is highly available and not exposed to performance or security risks that could impact core applications and transactions. “Our biggest concern is maintaining the continuity in the computer room and making sure our systems stay up and running,” says Gordon.

At the same time, San Francisco Health Plan needs to ensure the reliability of its network, protect sensitive healthcare information from misuse and help medical and administrative staff resolve any IT issues quickly. Addressing all these requirements can call for considerable internal resources, as Gordon confirms. “It’s very expensive to attract and retain IT staff with knowledge of all the different infrastructure areas. We wanted to avoid becoming a bottom-heavy organization with lots of technicians.”

“We had a clear choice: either buy products piecemeal and create a group of relationships with different vendors, or find an organization that had a cohesive solution to cover all our requirements. That organization was CA.”

Donald Gordon,
Chief Information Officer of the
San Francisco Health Plan

Solution

Enabling integration and automation

To meet its operational obligations without investing in additional resources, San Francisco Health Plan needed to find a cost-effective way to standardize and simplify its IT systems and services. “We had a clear choice: either buy products piecemeal and create a group of relationships with different vendors, or find an organization that had a cohesive solution to cover all our requirements. That organization was CA,” comments Gordon.

As a result, San Francisco Health Plan has adopted CA’s Enterprise IT Management (EITM) approach, which is based on a number of the CA Capability Solutions. Automation and integration lie at the heart of EITM, and for San Francisco Health Plan this is key not only for operational efficiency but also staff retention, business continuity and risk management.

Although the majority of the automation happens in the data center and on the helpdesk, San Francisco Health Plan has been able to extend this approach to software distribution, virus detection and its network operation.

Remote monitoring and management improves IT availability

Within the data center environment, Gordon and his team rely on a CA Dynamic & Virtual Systems Management solution to provide continual monitoring and alerts about issues that might impact IT availability. As Gordon explains, “CA Unicenter® Network and Systems Management (CA Unicenter NSM) has enabled us to automate both the complex and simple. For example, we can now identify critical changes to our air conditioning systems or spot when someone accidentally launches a runaway query.”

As a result, San Francisco Health Plan’s IT team can intervene before a problem impacts users or results in a systems outage. This is particularly important for the data center’s vital cooling facilities. Using CA Unicenter NSM, San Francisco Health Plan can ensure a controlled and remote shutdown of any system that might be at risk from over-heating as a result of an air conditioning fault. This means IT staff no longer need to monitor the organization’s thermal environment 24x7 or respond to as many emergency calls.

“We enjoy an unparalleled level of protection, and have not had any kind of Trojan, virus or worm activity since deploying the CA Threat Management solution.”

Donald Gordon

Chief Information Officer of the
San Francisco Health Plan

By combining CA Unicenter NSM with a CA Threat Management solution, San Francisco Health Plan can also safeguard the availability and security of its network. “We have not had any network outages in a very long time — although this is partially to do with our design, it’s also thanks to CA’s solutions,” comments Gordon. “We enjoy an unparalleled level of threat protection, and have not had any kind of Trojan, virus or worm activity since deploying the CA Threat Management solution.”

Reducing risk and complexity

Viruses are not the only security challenge facing San Francisco Health Plan. Ensuring that desktops are running the latest versions of key software packages is an important security defence. Using CA Change & Configuration Management solution, San Francisco Health Plan is able to ensure that the organization’s 105 desktops and laptops are synchronized by automating the roll-out of software upgrades.

If a user does experience a problem with their desktop — whether it’s due to a security breach, poor network bandwidth or a server outage — then the IT team can discover the root of the problem much more quickly using a combination of CA Unicenter NSM and CA Incident & Problem Management solution.

Any IT problems experienced by staff at San Francisco Health Plan are automatically logged into CA Service Desk, which helps ensure IT issues are dealt with effectively. As Gordon explains, “CA Service Desk has enabled us to create a formal helpdesk operation and develop workflow management processes that improve efficiency and reduce complexity.”

Result

Deliver a better service with less resource

Thanks to the success of this workflow approach in its IT operation, San Francisco Health Plan is now looking at standardizing all incident reporting via the CA solution — from human resources to customer services. “CA’s workflow management approach provides us with a great insight into any issues and problems, which helps to improve our customer service quality,” adds Gordon.

This is just one example of how CA’s EITM approach is helping San Francisco Health Plan improve its service delivery. Since partnering with CA, the organization has also been able to:

- Reduce capital expenditure
- Enhance regulatory compliance
- Improve IT staff retention
- Decrease business risk
- Achieve a lower staffing ratio

“By adopting CA’s EITM approach, we can rely on a very small IT staff to keep the heartbeat of the organization going,” comments Gordon. “Instead of having six or seven claims processors, we have two because of the level of automation we have been able to achieve using CA’s solutions.”

“By adopting CA’s EITM approach, we can rely on a very small staff to keep the heartbeat of the organization going.”

Donald Gordon

Chief Information Officer of the
San Francisco Health Plan

Despite this saving on overhead, the organization is still able to ensure that transactions — especially member’s claims — are processed efficiently.

Automation not only aids the transaction process but also helps ensure that the team at San Francisco Health Plan has reliable access to the data and applications they need to serve their members. As Gordon confirms, “CA has helped us immeasurably in keeping operational and IT issues down to a very low level. We can therefore focus on what’s really important — helping our members, providers and partners work together to achieve our goals for a healthier San Francisco.”

To learn more and see how CA software solutions enable other organizations to unify and simplify IT management for better business results, visit ca.com/customers.