

Facilitating Secure Exchange of Protected Health Information with Attunity MFT

Overview

The St. Paul Group partners with Attunity to secure and accelerate the delivery of confidential healthcare utilization and trend analytic data over standard internet connections.

St. Paul has been providing various data management and processing services to the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) since 1989. One of the mission-critical projects managed by St. Paul is the monthly collection, processing and analysis of over one million patient case records from fifty five hospitals throughout the State of Maryland. The reports generated from these records help to monitor, manage and control healthcare costs in the state and provide extensive statistical analysis for the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission and Financial Officers and Consultants within the healthcare industry.

Historically, the monthly data collection process was facilitated via registered courier. Data Administrators at each of the fifty-five Hospitals would burn the raw data to physical media (CDs and DVDs), which were then shipped to the St. Paul datacenter where staff would manually load and analyze the data. Between the respective hospital staffs and St. Paul's IT operations team, the amount of human capital required to facilitate the delivery of physical media could reach one hundred and twenty (120) hours each month.

Although this physical media delivery process was adequate at first, an ever-increasing volume of data and new HITECH Compliance-related security standards prompted St. Paul to look for a faster, more efficient and secure solution.

St. Paul selected Attunity RepliWeb software as their core application infrastructure for Ad- Hoc (User-Driven) and automated (Host-to-Host) digital file collection and redistribution for the HSCRC project. Attunity RepliWeb was instrumental in lowering operational overhead associated with file delivery, in speeding end-to-end data processing cycles, and in demonstrating compliance with new HITECH standards for Protected Health Information (PHI) security.

The Challenge: Secure, Web-Based File Transfer

Exchange Case Mix Data More Efficiently— Exchanging physical media via courier was slow, and required significant human involvement to manually pre-process, package, send, and post-process the data. These operations were responsible for increases in overhead costs for both St. Paul and their customers, and caused a significant delay in data collection and reporting cycles. A managed file transfer solution would allow St. Paul to exchange this data over standard Internet connections.

Addressing HIPAA / HITECH Compliance Standards for Data Security—The HITECH Act, which took effect in February of 2010, represents a significant extension of Federal HIPAA Compliance standards for the protection of Protected Health Information (PHI). More specifically, Section 13401 of the HITECH Act holds business associates like The St. Paul Group to the same data security and stewardship standards (and penalties) that healthcare providers are held to under HIPAA.

As such, St. Paul would now be held directly responsible for data security breaches, the improper use of PHI, and/or for failing to maintain adequate standards for its protection. The penalties for businesses and individuals who fail to comply with the new provisions



Business Benefits

- Accelerates and Simplifies the Exchange of Millions of Records Every Month
- Meets HIPAA / HITECH Requirements for Protected Health Information (PHI) Data Security
- Automatically Transfers Patient Case Mix Data to Appropriate Recipient(s)
- Decreases Labor Overhead and Eliminates Shipping Costs
- Provides a Full Audit Trail on Every Transaction

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—Fred Levinsky, CEO, The St. Paul Group

may include criminal charges, large fines and/or civil sanctions. For these reasons, St. Paul determined that shipping media containing PHI data was no longer an option. The new MFT solution would need to provide strong security and auditing capabilities in order to meet the new standards.

Implement a Flexible, User-Friendly Solution—Because St. Paul's customers maintain disparate systems and employ staff of varying capabilities and backgrounds, the new file exchange platform would need to be flexible and easy to use. Implementation, maintenance, and support costs should be minimal, so as not to negate the benefits of switching to an electronic file transfer platform.

The Solution: Attunity MFT

After reviewing a number of MFT vendors and completing thorough product evaluations, The St. Paul Group selected Attunity RepliWeb as its new file exchange platform, citing its robust security and auditing capabilities, ease of management, ease of use, and low total cost of ownership.

St. Paul's end users (hospital administrators or liaisons) now utilize Attunity RepliWeb's intuitive web user interface (Web UI) to send case mix data electronically to one of five predefined recipient accounts at St. Paul. These recipient accounts effectively pre-sort the data by the type of healthcare service received; Inpatient, Outpatient, Psych, Chronic Care, or "Other". Each of the Attunity RepliWeb recipient accounts is monitored by a team of data managers at St. Paul, who process the data as it comes in. St. Paul's staff then uses Attunity RepliWeb to send processed data and reports back to liaisons at the hospitals and to analysts at the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission.

This approach has accelerated data collection and distribution processes dramatically – customers can now submit and receive large sets of data in minutes rather than days. With a full complement of strong encryption standards and a full audit trail on every transfer, Attunity RepliWeb provides St. Paul with a highly reliable electronic file transfer platform that meets their strict quality of service and compliance-driven security and auditing mandates.

"Attunity RepliWeb enables us to meet HITECH standards for handling highly confidential healthcare information while also accelerating our data collection processes", said Fred Levinsky, CEO at The St. Paul Group. "Our customers and partners absolutely love the simple, intuitive Web interface and the reliability that Attunity RepliWeb provides.

"Taking it a Step Further: Automating Host-to-Host File Exchange

For the most part, St. Paul's Attunity RepliWeb implementation centers on Ad-Hoc file delivery, providing a secure, easy to use way for users to exchange files– but this only scratches the surface of Attunity RepliWeb's capabilities. Attunity RepliWeb can also facilitate the automated, applicationdriven (host-to-host) transfers that are often tied to business, billing and supply chain infrastructure. For these implementations, organizations may leverage core Attunity RepliWeb features like hot folder monitoring and extensive pre / post-transfer processing options.

One of Maryland's largest hospitals worked with St. Paul to build a fully automated system to collect its healthcare utilization data and deliver it to the proper HSCRC recipient accounts at the St. Paul datacenter. The system utilizes Attunity RepliWeb's hot folder monitoring feature to periodically scan specific folders on the hospital's network. When new data appears in one of the folders, Attunity RepliWeb automatically packages, encrypts and transfers the data over a secure network connection to St. Paul's data center. Every time a transfer takes place, contacts at St. Paul and the hospital are notified via email and the transfer is logged in order to meet auditing requirements.

With this automated architecture in place, the hospital is able to efficiently and securely transmit HSCRC case mix data to St. Paul's datacenter with minimal manual intervention. The system has proven to be a significant time-saver for staff at the hospital, and it ensures that St. Paul has access to the most accurate and timely data.

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