



Physical Therapy Organization Resolves Network and IT Performance Challenges

Relying on outsourced IT support, North Georgia Physical Therapy Associates suffered from a number of ongoing technical and network issues that took extended time to be addressed. With the help of a rebuilt infrastructure and 24/7 network management from Sharp, the physical therapy organization has nearly eliminated IT issues, drastically improved overall productivity and protected the integrity of important business data.

Business Environment Challenges

Located in the North Georgia mountains approximately 90 minutes outside Atlanta, North Georgia Physical Therapy Associates (North Georgia) relied on a single IT consultant for network and infrastructure management until 2015. The practice then tried outsourcing IT support to various local contacts, but was unable to resolve persistent issues or establish the reliable assistance needed to keep its three offices up and running. Among the challenges were: problematic remote connectivity, slow network speeds and issues with line-of-business application performance. North Georgia also needed to update its IT infrastructure to improve HIPAA compliance for healthcare practices.

Technology Solutions

In mid 2016, following a Managed Network Services assessment from Sharp Business Systems, North Georgia decided to conduct a complete IT overhaul. Sharp discovered many issues with the company's servers, firewalls and hardware, necessitating extensive changes to ensure superior network performance. At the recommendation of Sharp, the practice established around-the-clock network monitoring and management, immediate-response help desk assistance, onsite support as needed, and a backup and disaster recovery solution with file storage.

Industry
Healthcare

Organization
North Georgia Physical Therapy Associates

Challenges

- Unreliable network performance
- Ongoing problems with systems and applications
- Productivity loss due to poor system performance
- Inconsistent IT support
- Dated and limited backup solutions
- Unsecured data and network
- Poor compliance with HIPAA regulations

Solutions

- Implemented network monitoring and management
- Established around the clock help desk support
- Created back up and disaster recovery services
- Updated various hardware

Results

- Resolved ongoing network and IT issues
- Established faster overall network speeds
- Recuperated lost employee hours
- Secured business data against loss or theft
- Improved business-wide productivity
- Enhanced customer/patient relations
- Established 24/7 network monitoring and management
- Enabled compliance with HIPAA regulations

Proven results

The performance results were immediately visible to North Georgia's 19 employees. From faster overall network speeds, to problem-free solution functionality, the practice is more productive than ever before. The newly installed firewalls, routers and primary server, coupled with 24/7 network monitoring, has eliminated nearly all of the IT issues across the practice's three regional offices.

"We had recurring and ongoing issues across our network and systems that were never resolved, and we couldn't find the right partner to improve the situation," says Lauren Cole, practice manager for North Georgia. "Not surprisingly, Sharp discovered additional complications with our infrastructure throughout the implementation process. The technicians addressed each new problem as it arose, working through the night to avoid even a single day of lost productivity."

The Backup and Disaster Recovery solution now ensures both local and cloud restore points that protect important business data at all times. Prior to working with Sharp, North Georgia had limited backup capabilities that required daily, manual deletion of old information to ensure that new backups could be made. The business now has full confidence in the backup and disaster recovery solution from Sharp.

North Georgia recently experienced severe flooding and a landslide occurred at one of the office locations (Ellijay, Georgia). The new solution ensured that the business experienced zero data loss, and reduced downtime to less than a day. Sharp provided onsite support to help move all the essential hardware, and set up the office at its new location within 24 hours.

"Not only did our new disaster recovery plan prove its value at that time, but Sharp also demonstrated their commitment to providing superior customer service," continued Cole. "We had to move our firewall, laptops, switches, and everything that kept our office up and running. Sharp even worked with our internet provider to get the connection in the new space, and didn't leave until we were comfortable."

An integral part of fast problem-resolution and prevention at North Georgia is the help desk support from Sharp. In the past, a single IT consultant was responsible for both large and small IT problems. Depending on consultant availability, North Georgia might wait days or weeks for assistance. Employees now get immediate help desk support via phone, or online help desk chat.



"We have leveraged the help desk support countless times and each time they have been very responsive and worked with us until we solved the issue, whether it required additional support or onsite assistance," continues Cole. "One employee was struggling with Adobe® software and leveraged help desk chat to resolve the situation in a matter of minutes."

Adhering to federally mandated HIPAA regulations is an important aspect of information management at North Georgia. Previously, North Georgia was without the proper security to prevent illegal access to confidential patient information, or reliable backup to protect against potential data loss. The office now feels confident in its HIPAA compliance.

The practice also cites more efficient office operations and overall improved patient services resulting from the reconfigured network and IT services.

"Front office employees are much more efficient than ever before. We have recuperated lost hours spent waiting for slow systems and network hang ups. From scheduling to document management, everything moves faster, simpler and with more reliability," says Cole.

"The quality knowledge provided through our partnership with Sharp has become an invaluable asset to our business. We would never have imagined that we could obtain such fast, reliable and secure network and IT performance and have improved our entire way of doing business as a result."



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