

Healthcare Services Provider Thrives with HIPAA-Compliant Cloud Communications

MHM Services, Inc., healthcare service provider to correctional facilities



When healthcare services provider MHM Services, Inc. needed to replace its on-site PBX phone systems, it turned to technology solutions provider CDW and to 8x8, Inc. Two weeks after signing the contract, MHM had just one weekend to implement network services at seven prisons geographically spread across a state. To complicate matters, cell phone use is prohibited at these prisons. Thanks to 8x8 technology, the IT techs were able to call and instant message each other using their laptops, collaborating to solve issues and completing the project on time. According to CDW, outstanding products and support are why 8x8 is on their list of valued partners.

MHM Services, Inc. is a leading provider of healthcare services to correctional facilities across the US. The company currently employs more than 3,000 clinical, management and support staff nationwide. Healthcare services are provided through contracts with local and state agencies, and these government contracts are managed through a network of 20 regional offices.

When Christie Nader, Sr. Director, Information Technology, joined MHM in 2014, each regional office had its own premises-based PBX phone system. The rationale was that this would make it easier and more cost-effective to open and close offices as contracts were awarded and ended, typically within three to five years. On paper it all made sense.

PBX Hardware Maintenance Became Time-Consuming and Costly

But when Nader dug into the costs more deeply, she discovered that there were additional factors to consider. Maintaining all this hardware was time-consuming and expensive—not to mention a significant burden on her relatively small IT organization. Perpetual licenses continued to incur costs, even when phone service was no longer needed. And offices with long-term contracts lasting a decade or more ended up with antiquated hardware that had to be replaced.



MHM Services, Inc.

Customer: MHM Services, Inc.

Industry: Healthcare services

Locations:

Headquarters in Vienna, Virginia;
20 locations in 15 US states

Previous Phone System:

Individual premises-based PBXs in each office

8x8 Products: Virtual Office

Lines Deployed to Date: 43

Estimated Total Lines

After Full Deployment: 252

Favorite 8x8 Features:

Outstanding user experience and training resources

Primary Reason Chose 8x8:

Wanted to eliminate PBX hardware and maintenance

Website: www.mhm-services.com



“As a healthcare service provider, we have to ensure that stored messages are secured and encrypted to comply with HIPAA regulations. But in evaluating the other system... the lack of security for instant messages was a deal-breaker.”

—**Christie Nader**
Sr. Director of
Information Technology
MHM Services, Inc.

Each office also had several landlines which included per-minute long distance charges. Along with that, there were many toll-free teleconference lines used for hundreds of meetings each week with a per-minute charge for each attendee.

Nader realized that eliminating PBX hardware, minimizing administration costs, eliminating long distance charges and cutting telecom line costs would ultimately prove more economical for the company as it opened and closed offices across the country.

“It was clear we needed to start looking at cloud solutions,” she says. “We wanted a replacement system that was more flexible, less expensive, and scalable up or down.”

Industry Insider Gartner Recommends 8x8

In October 2014, Nader talked with a Gartner analyst at the firm’s annual Symposium/ITxpo. The analyst recommended a short list of cloud communications providers, including Magic Quadrant Leader 8x8.

Nader also reached out to IT solutions provider CDW for help in evaluating systems, vendors, and prices. CDW had brokered phone systems she implemented for previous employers, and the two had a relationship stretching back more than a decade. This time when Nader asked about cost-effective cloud solutions for MHM, 8x8 was on the list of suggested vendors CDW presented.

“As an aggregator of cloud solutions, CDW is deeply familiar with the market leaders in the UCaaS space.” said Adam Carreno, solution architect, CDW. “CDW has unique insight into what customers need to complete a successful implementation, as we work with clients across multiple industries with varying demands. Through this depth of experience, and the validation of research firms like Gartner, we can advise clients on the best technology solutions for their needs.”

8x8’s User Experience and Training Materials Stood Out from the Competition

With help from CDW, Nader watched demos, evaluated equipment and compared features for several systems. Reliability, support and costs were similar across the board, but 8x8 clearly stood out when it came time to rate the user experience.

“You can have the most robust phone system in the world, but if the user experience isn’t great, it’s a failure,” says Nader.

Not only was 8x8’s user interface exceptionally friendly, so were its multimedia training resources, a key selling point for Nader.

“Our people are healthcare professionals and not that tech-savvy, so training is essential,” she explains. “8x8 has quality training resources, including user guides, YouTube videos and live webinars. Having all those resources available help make for a great user experience.”

Cloud Storage and HIPAA Compliance Close the Deal

Eventually Nader narrowed the field to 8x8 and one competitor. While on the surface the two seemed very similar, she soon uncovered a crucial difference: only 8x8 was truly cloud-based and HIPAA-compliant.

“As a healthcare service provider, we have to ensure that stored messages are secured and encrypted to comply with HIPAA regulations,” explains Nader. “But in evaluating the other system, we learned that instant messages sent from the desktop are stored locally on the user’s C drive—not in the cloud. The lack of security for IMs was a deal-breaker.”



Whenever we open a new office, I know implementing 8x8 will be quick and easy because there's no hardware to worry about. Our phone system is much less complicated now that it's in the cloud.

—**Christie Nader** Sr. Director of Information Technology MHM Services, Inc.

Softphones Enable Real-Time Communication When Cell Phones Are Prohibited

Just two weeks after MHM signed a contract for 8x8 service, the new partnership was put to the test. MHM's technology team had to support a contract startup for a large state contract and had to quickly take over IT management from the previous vendor. This time, however, Nader's team was not just responsible for one regional office; at the last minute they learned they had to install and manage the IT for seven geographically dispersed prison locations.

"The situation was unusually complicated for us," says Nader. "Per contract terms, the previous vendor couldn't turn over any information in advance, so as the clock struck midnight and their contract expired, we had to move quickly to get all these locations up and running in one weekend."

The situation was further complicated by prison regulations, which prohibit cell phone use on premises. The only phones available were not in the areas in which the techs were working. Nader's team needed a way to communicate in real time from their various locations across the state. The only option they could think of was to schedule conference calls every couple of hours and have each team member dial in from any phone they could find away from their work.

Luckily their new 8x8 service provided a much more effective workaround. 8x8 Virtual Office effectively turns computers into softphones, enabling voice calls without actual phones. As Nader's team worked at the dispersed prison sites, they were able to call and chat with each other in real time using their laptops.

"8x8 was incredibly helpful in this situation because we needed 24-hour troubleshooting for our IT team," says Nader. "Being able to communicate in real time to quickly resolve issues was essential to completing the implementation on time. Ultimately, completing the transition quickly meant that there would be no disruption in healthcare services for our state client."

IT Team Improves Responsiveness with Call Queues and Mobile App

Following MHM's successful initial state contract 8x8 deployment, Nader rolled out the service to her own IT team, to a few employees in the HR department, and to regional offices in Maryland and Pennsylvania. 8x8's advanced communication features have already had a major impact on her organization.

For example, the IT help desk now uses queues to manage incoming calls instead of sending callers to voicemail when the help desk cannot answer right away.

"Queues give our callers live access to the help desk," says Nader. "Most people prefer to wait instead of leaving a message and asking for a callback."

8x8's mobile app for iOS and Android devices has also improved the IT team's responsiveness to callers.

"My team is very busy and constantly on the move, helping users," says Nader. "With 8x8's mobile app, they can call, chat or check voicemail from anywhere."

CASE STUDY

Virtual meetings that provide face-to-face contact through videoconferencing help on board new company employees. Nader notes that recently her team “met” a new regional vice president a time zone away without leaving their premises.

“It felt like we were meeting him in person, and was much more engaging than an audio call,” she says. “We’re encouraging everyone to take full advantage of 8x8’s virtual meeting capabilities. This will create better collaboration among our healthcare staff, enable more dynamic client meetings via video, and potentially save money in travel since ‘road warrior’ type staff may skip a few trips as they use more video.”

Owning the Technology Source Sets 8x8 Apart

In order to leave plenty of time for user training, Nader plans to phase in the rest of MHM’s 8x8 deployment over the next 6 months.

As MHM wins new contracts and opens new locations across the US, Nader is confident that 8x8 will evolve and grow with her organization.

“Whenever we open a new office, I know implementing 8x8 will be quick and easy because there’s no hardware to worry about,” she says. “We also have the flexibility to move offices or users without a problem. Our phone system is much less complicated now that it’s in the cloud.”

“Many of the systems we evaluated look almost identical because they are all based on the same open source, and are at the mercy of the same open platform,” agrees Nader. 8x8 is different. Our phone system is constantly being updated and improved because 8x8 owns its own destiny.

Find out how 8x8 can help your business. Call **1.866.862.2811** or visit **www.8x8.com**

