

Nonprofit Patient Assistance Foundation Helps Ensure HIPAA Compliance with 8x8 Virtual Contact Center

*Patient Services, Inc., nonprofit premium and
copayment foundation*



PSI is a unique nonprofit with a unique mission: providing financial assistance to patients with serious chronic illness. When the nonprofit's entire phone system crashed, making it impossible for patients and donors to get through, the executive team decided to move communications to the cloud. After an intensive selection process, they choose 8x8. Why? Because no other cloud provider offers the same level of HIPAA certification and compliance that 8x8 does.

Patient Services, Inc. (PSI) is a ground breaking nonprofit and the first charitable organization of its kind. Based in Virginia, PSI was founded by Dr. Dana Kuhn, a clinical counselor who witnessed firsthand the pain of families struggling to pay the medical costs for loved ones with serious chronic illnesses. Dr. Kuhn recognized the need to provide a safety net to help these patients keep up with expensive premiums and copayments.

Since its inception in 1989, PSI has provided financial support and guidance for qualified patients with specific, rare chronic diseases. The nonprofit subsidizes the costs of health insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs (copayments/coinsurance). It also offers a variety of legal services free of charge through the PSI-A.C.C.E.S.S. Program for specific rare disease communities.

To support its charitable mission, PSI solicits donations from leading pharmaceutical, corporate, government and individual sponsors. These donations enable assistance programs that help patients and their families rediscover hope and health. The main point of contact for both donors and patients is PSI's call center, which is based in Richmond, Virginia.



Customer Name: Patient Services, Inc. (PSI)

Locations: Midlothian, Virginia (headquarters)

Industry: Nonprofit premium and copayment foundation

8x8 Products:

- 83 Virtual Office extensions
- 36 Virtual Contact Center seats

Connectivity: Comcast fiber optic and Verizon FiOS

Favorite 8x8 Feature(s):

Auto-callback feature that lets callers hold their place in queue without waiting on hold

Primary Reason Chose 8x8:

HIPAA compliance and certification

Previous Phone System:

On-premises hardware PBX with Windstream voice and data services and Zicom call recording

Website:

www.patientservicesinc.org



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—**Michael Flagg**,
Epitome's Unified
Communications Specialist

Limited Capacity Leads to Dropped Calls

In 2010 Epitome Networks, a leading technology solutions provider, reached out to PSI and learned they looking to replace their very old phone system which had limited call center capabilities. The nonprofit ultimately selected an on-premises hardware PBX, with Windstream voice and data services, and a separate call recording application from Zeacom.

This setup worked well for a number of years, but by 2014 some issues had emerged. First, PSI's call traffic had increased significantly, but the contact center's capacity had not.

"Our system used coaxial lines and could only handle up to 25 calls in queue," explains Stacey Pugh, IT project manager for PSI. "The 26th call would be dropped, which meant that patients who needed help could not reach us, and important donors could not contact us either. We just couldn't rely on our phones anymore, and it was becoming a serious problem."

Second, although it was possible to upgrade the system's hardware and software, the cost of doing so was prohibitive. Management questioned whether it was worth investing thousands of dollars in a communications system that was already four years

old. The total cost of ownership (TCO) for the on-premises solution had become a burden for PSI, a nonprofit with limited IT budget and resources.

Need for Business Continuity Spurs Move to the Cloud

Then the unthinkable happened: in December 2014, PSI's entire phone system went down and nobody could get through. It was clear the nonprofit needed to make a change quickly, and the executive team jumped into action. Rather than upgrade or replace the on-premises solution, they decided to move all communications to the cloud.

"It was clear that moving to the cloud would improve our business continuity," says Mandy Herbert, director of marketing and public relations for PSI. "We wanted a contingency plan and backup services to ensure our patients and donors could always reach us."

Once again PSI reached out to Epitome Networks for help in selecting a new cloud-based solution. Initially Michael Flagg, Epitome's unified communications specialist, was surprised that the nonprofit was ready to replace its 4-year-old phone system, but as he analyzed the costs of continuing to maintain and upgrade it, he realized that moving to the cloud made good sense.

"In the long run, migrating to a pure IP solution simplifies administration and lowers costs for nonprofits like PSI," he says. "Trying to stay current with on-site hardware and software is just too costly for those types of organizations."

Partner Agreement Enables Consultant to Propose 8x8

Flagg also realized that the timing of PSI's search for a new cloud solution was fortuitously good. Epitome had recently signed a partnership agreement with Intelisys, the industry's leading technology services distributor and master agent for telecom, cloud and carrier services. Intelisys is committed to delivering the best carrier-neutral solutions to end-user customers through its partner community. This nationwide network of telecom sales and consulting professionals has access to more than 70 suppliers—including 8x8.

8x8's Pricing, Technology and Leadership Stand Out

With Flagg's guidance, PSI began an intensive evaluation process of four cloud-based providers. Two quickly fell to the wayside; their contact center software simply wasn't robust enough to meet the nonprofit's needs. The decision then came down to a choice between 8x8 and another leading competitor. On every level, 8x8's solution stood out.

"8x8 offered toll-free bundles and their demos were very impressive," recalls Flagg. "It was clear that 8x8 delivers great value for the money."

In-house R&D also differentiated 8x8 from the other cloud provider.

"Many cloud providers are dependent on BroadSoft or another third-party platform," explains Flagg. "8x8 has internally developed its own platform—and has an API that opens the possibility of integration with the customer's in-house software."

PSI found 8x8's long track record of industry leadership reassuring as well.

"The other cloud provider hadn't been around that long and didn't have the same experience," says Flagg. "8x8 is an established leader and has built a strong reputation for reliability over many years."

HIPAA Compliance Becomes the Tipping Point

But the tipping point for PSI was an area where 8x8 is unmatched among cloud providers: HIPAA compliance.

"HIPAA compliance was a key factor in the evaluation process," says Flagg. "The nature of PSI's mission means that they deal with sensitive healthcare information all day long. It's important to them and to their donors—many of whom are large pharmaceutical companies—that all that information remain secure, per HIPAA requirements. None of the other providers we looked at had achieved anything close to 8x8's level of certification and compliance."

Auto-callback Helps Keep Call Traffic Flowing Freely

In January 2015, PSI began rolling out its new cloud-based phone service and contact center. PSI's 25 contact center agents caught on quickly to 8x8's user-friendly interface, and the deployment went smoothly across the board.

An immediate benefit of the new 8x8 solution was no more dropped calls. All calls to the contact center now get through, and callers even have the option to get an automatic callback when it's their turn instead of waiting on hold.

"8x8 keeps our call traffic flowing very well," says IT manager Pugh. "Callers really like our auto-callback feature because they can keep their place in queue without having to wait. It saves time and reduces frustration for them, which makes for a much better customer experience."

Robust Reporting and Built-in Call Recording Reduce Costs

The new 8x8 Virtual Contact Center includes robust call reporting features that help PSI track call volumes and agent activity throughout the day. Using this information, the nonprofit can optimize its contact center staffing levels while continuing to provide excellent service to callers.

Another cost-saving benefit of the 8x8 solution is that call recording is now built into the contact center. That means no separate app to purchase, manage and maintain.

"8x8 delivers a complete, robust, cloud-based contact center that meets our needs very well," says Herbert.



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Why Moving to the Cloud Might Be the Better Solution

Prior to consulting on PSI's replacement cloud solution, Flagg was not familiar with 8x8 because he had previously focused on hardware systems. Today he is the biggest proponent of 8x8 at Epitome Networks.

"From the front end to the back end, I believe in what 8x8 delivers," he says. "Every installation I've done has gone well, and the 8x8 team has been incredible to work with. Although some of our clients do need on-premises systems, it's wonderful to have such a high-quality cloud offering in our portfolio. It allows me to sit down with clients, look at their capex and opex, and then explain why moving to the cloud might be the better solution."

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

