



How to Secure Your Healthcare Communications in a World of Security and Compliance Threats

Time to Secure Your Communications

At present, most healthcare organizations allocate only three percent of their Information Technology (IT) budget to security.¹ Yet, the incidence of data breach rose over 22 percent from 2010 to 2014 and is expected to keep rising. According to a recent study by the Ponemon Institute, 90% of all healthcare organizations experienced some form of data compromise, ranging from unintentional employee mishandling to deliberate cybertheft, during the period 2012-2014.² Just ask Anthem Blue Cross, WellPoint, Community Health Systems or any number of other affected companies whether security breaches significantly affected their businesses and reputations.



The proliferation of new devices and new ways to send, receive and store information is contributing to a dramatic increase in data leaks and privacy violations at most companies. Complex, multi-vendor environments can be especially easy targets for hackers, who make sport of finding new ways into your systems.

Can your organization handle these new threats?

Is your company fully prepared to defend your communications data? Have you assessed your vulnerabilities? Fortified every weak spot? Are you exposed to risk without even knowing it? How secure are you?



Staying in Sync with HIPAA

Throughout the past two decades, legislation has been crafted that mandates healthcare providers to protect the privacy of patients. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) was passed in 1996, and has been modified many times since. The passage of a companion law, the 2009 Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act calls for stricter enforcement, both civil and criminal, of HIPAA's privacy provisions. Violations can be painful, ranging from \$100 for a minor infraction to \$1.5 million where willful neglect is found. They can also result in additional fines and civil law suits.³

Most VoIP communications providers are subject to HIPAA since offerings typically include voicemail, call recording, and faxes transmitted and stored in ways deemed "persistent" and covered under the regulation. Your best defense against communications-related HIPAA breaches is to work with recognized third-party-validated HIPAA compliant communications providers. In addition, you should insist upon tailored Business Associate Agreements from companies that are experienced in providing HIPAA-compliant solutions.

Are You Liable?

Healthcare organizations are liable for HIPAA violations of downstream vendors. For instance, if a clinic receives billing services from a vendor, that vendor's potential HIPAA violation exposes the clinic to liability. In the event of an audit, the downstream vendor and the clinic may be penalized for non-compliance and suffer loss of credibility and reputation. Thus, healthcare organizations must make the effort to validate HIPAA compliance of their vendor's solutions. Fortunately, some vendors like 8x8 have already been validated as HIPAA-compliant which minimizes the risk and expense.



It's Smart to Have Your Head in the Clouds

Think storing data on the cloud in a hacker-filled universe is counter-intuitive? Well you may not be alone, but you may be wrong. Most legacy PBX systems, acquired over a long period of time, tend to contain a variety of non-conforming applications and servers—a nightmare for the typical IT department. Cloud-based solutions tend to be the opposite, offering a uniform environment of modern servers. They can actually be even safer than on-premises solutions if they are:

- Continuously monitored and under surveillance
- Built from the ground up with security as the top priority
- Updated constantly to stay ahead of hackers and malware
- One unified system, making it easier to spot anomalies and thwart attacks

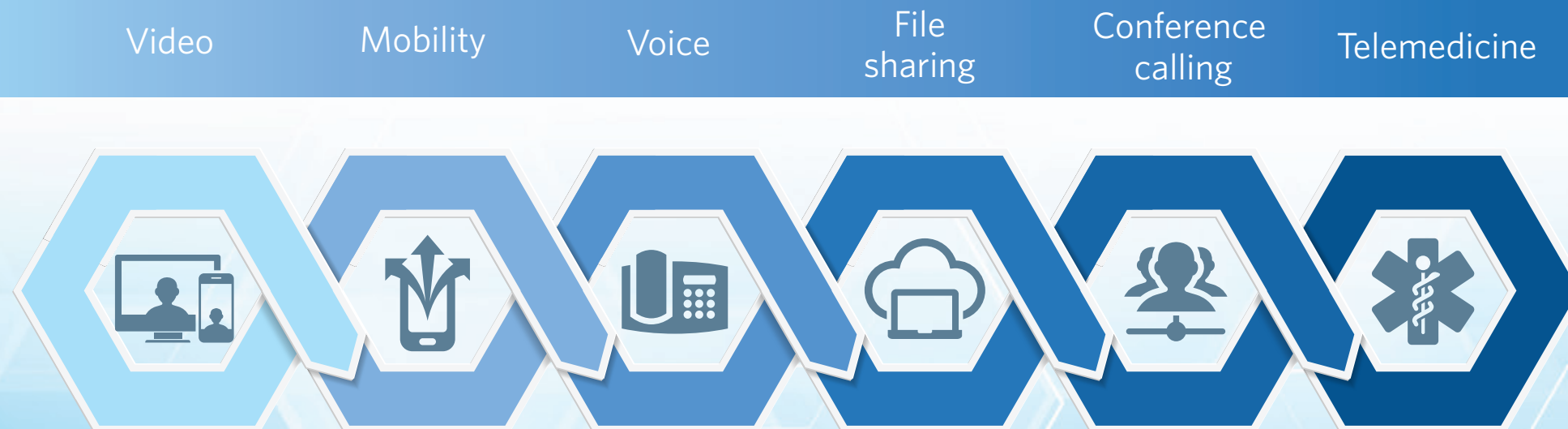


A cloud-based solution should also be designed with compliance in mind. 8x8's HIPAA and HITECH expertise flows through everything the company touches, including its software, which is built to easily accommodate changes in pertinent regulations.

Get What You Need from a Secure Communications Provider

Healthcare providers are increasingly driven to improve efficiency by integrating workflows and applying new technologies to the medical arena. Presence technology lets critical personnel know who is immediately available in an emergency. Locate and communicate with caregivers in their office or on the go via their mobile device.

In addition, your communications solution should facilitate secure meetings in a variety of ways and for various purposes, including:



It Pays to Provide a Better Patient Experience

Patient experience is increasingly important to providers and third-party insurers. Questionnaires like the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Survey (HCAHPS) actually link patient satisfaction to third-party reimbursement.⁴

Patient behavior is now similar to that of other types of consumers. Healthcare communications should facilitate patient interactions with the following features:

- Call forwarding
- Auto attendant
- Call routing
- Electronic faxing
- Voicemail
- Call recording
- Mobility (mobile apps, smartphones, etc.)

Contact Centers Help You Better Manage Customer Experience

When hosting a call center, ensuring the optimal patient experience requires technology that supports a high volume of patient interaction, connects them automatically to the person they seek, and helps them communicate through a variety of channels, including:

- Text
- Voice
- Chat
- Web
- File sharing



Secure Cloud-Based Communications Provide Key Benefits for the Healthcare Industry

High levels of patient/consumer satisfaction

Compliance with health information related regulations



Increased staff productivity

Integrated, multiple channels of communication

What to Look for in Healthcare Communications Technology

- Meets the growing demand for secure, reliable, continually monitored, updated and improved communications systems
- Has been third-party validated as compliant with HIPAA regulations for information privacy and security
- Offers tailored BAAs to protect your compliance
- Protects data in motion and at rest
- Requires lower capital requirements than competing alternatives
- Lowers operating expenses for cost-sensitive healthcare providers
- Increases productivity and accessibility of staff by enabling communications on the right device, in the right place and at the right time
- Provides the highest level of reliability and state-of-the-art analytics
- Integrates communications with security and compliance policies and procedures
- Scales with changing customer/patient needs
- Supplies fully automatic disaster recovery



8x8 provides the most complete suite of communication and collaboration solutions for providers and vendors in the healthcare sector. You can depend on our regulatory and technological expertise to securely fulfill your every need.

Don't risk it—protect your communications data with 8x8.

Call Now at
1.866.862.2811



Learn how 8x8's business communication and collaboration solutions can secure your healthcare communications, or visit us at www.8x8.com.

Sources:

¹<http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20150411/MAGAZINE/304119987>

²Ponemon Institute, Fifth Annual Benchmark Study on Privacy and Healthcare Data, May, 2015

³US Department of Health & Human Services (2014) HITECH Act Enforcement Interim Final Rule. September, 2014.

⁴<http://www.hcahpsonline.org/SummaryAnalyses.aspx>