



Renal Advantage Delivers Outstanding Patient Care with Help from Savvis.

Overview

Renal Advantage Inc. (RAI) is a Brentwood TN based provider of outpatient dialysis services that operates more than 147 renal dialysis centers around the country. As the third largest for-profit provider of dialysis services in the United States, Renal Advantage prides itself on a patient-centric operating philosophy that focuses on improving the quality and length of each patient's life through integrity, accountability, caring, and teamwork.

Business Opportunity

Because most of its revenues come from government and insurance company reimbursements, Renal Advantage doesn't have much flexibility in how it prices its services. "Our main challenge in today's economic climate is delivering more value for less cost," said Michael Klein, the president and CEO of Renal Advantage.

Renal Advantage centers are renowned for their quality of care and superlative customer service. "Our customers are mostly elderly, and tend to suffer from a variety of major illnesses," said Klein. "It's our job to make their treatments go as smoothly as possible while simultaneously keeping costs down."

Solution

Renal Advantage's IT leadership has achieved these things by keeping its IT staff lean and mean — there are only 30 employees to support all of Renal Advantage's technology needs — by centralizing all computer systems into its data center outside Nashville; and by outsourcing as much of their IT infrastructure as possible.

In the case of this last point, outsourcing its network to Savvis has proven to be one of the keys to delivering high-quality patient care at a reasonable price.

For cost reasons, Renal Advantage didn't want to place IT personnel at each of its 147 centers, so it centralized all its core systems to its data center, and provided access to them via the Savvis network. Among the applications that are operated this way is the mission-critical one that supports patient care administration — electronic medical records. Renal Advantage is far ahead of the industry curve in this area. Their application includes the ability for medical professionals to do

Company:

Renal Advantage Inc.

Industry:

Healthcare

Line of Business:

Outpatient kidney dialysis services

Location:

Brentwood, TN

Summary:

Renal Advantage, a leading provider of outpatient dialysis services, required an utterly reliable network for delivering its mission-critical electronic medical record (EMR) system from the data center in Nashville to 147 centers that were scattered around the country. By outsourcing its network infrastructure to Savvis, Renal Advantage has ensured the quality of care of patients while keeping cost contained. A recent update to Savvis' Cisco ATN MPLS network has enhanced network performance and reliability, helping Renal Advantage concentrate on its core business: serving patients.



RENAL ADVANTAGE INC.

“chair-side charting,” where patient treatments are documented in real time into electronic records that can easily be shared among different Renal Advantage centers and with doctors, hospitals, and insurance companies. Not only does this translate into higher quality of care for Renal Advantage patients, but it streamlines operations at Renal Advantage centers and helps them save significant staff time and money. And this simply wouldn't be possible without a reliable and high-performing network.

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**- Michael Klein
President and CEO, Renal Advantage Inc.**

Benefits

First and foremost is the fact that the Savvis network — which is wholly owned and operated by Savvis — is utterly reliable, with some of the best service level agreements in the industry to back it up.

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Should a network-related issue arise — however minor — Renal Advantage's IT team will get an immediate notification from Savvis via email, followed up by a personal call. If for any reason an issue has to be escalated, Klein said, “Savvis is completely transparent, and sets our expectations of what we can expect from their service technicians and support personnel. They are extraordinarily responsive.”

Savvis also takes a significant burden off Renal Advantage's staff. Until recently, the company didn't have a network administrator — Savvis took care of everything. Klein only had to hire one due to an acquisition of another business that had a preexisting contract with another network vendor.

Indeed, Renal Advantage's strategy for expansion is through acquiring other kidney dialysis centers. Whenever it completes such an acquisition, it has to convert the center's IT infrastructure to Renal Advantage's rapidly and cost effectively.

“Savvis has always gone above and beyond the call of duty,” agreed Karl Kokko, chief information officer (CIO) of Renal Advantage. “With Savvis' help, we are able to get new centers operational — including all the hardware and the network connectivity and access to our core applications — on the very first day an acquisition is finalized. This is a fairly complex process, but Savvis has helped us to achieve extremely rapid deployment.”

Originally on Savvis' IIP ATM network, Renal Advantage in 2008 upgraded to the new Cisco ATN MPLS network. According to IT director Steve Duke, what prompted the upgrade was the need for quality of service across the board. “We have one major application that is distributed across the country from our Nashville data center, and we needed to make sure that this one system had the highest quality performance,” said Duke, who said the migration went “really smoothly.”

Karl Kokko agreed and said diligent preparation by Savvis was essential. “Because Savvis did all the pre-work for the upgrade behind the scenes, we got the actual migration down to 10 minutes per center,” said Kokko. “In some cases, the network migration happened while patients were undergoing dialysis, and the staff didn't even realize the network had been down.”

Future

As Renal Advantage continues to grow — as it's been doing at double digits for a number of years now — it only foresees depending on Savvis more than ever. “We are completely happy with Savvis, and as we continue to grow, our relationship with Savvis will grow as well,” said Klein.

**For more information
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