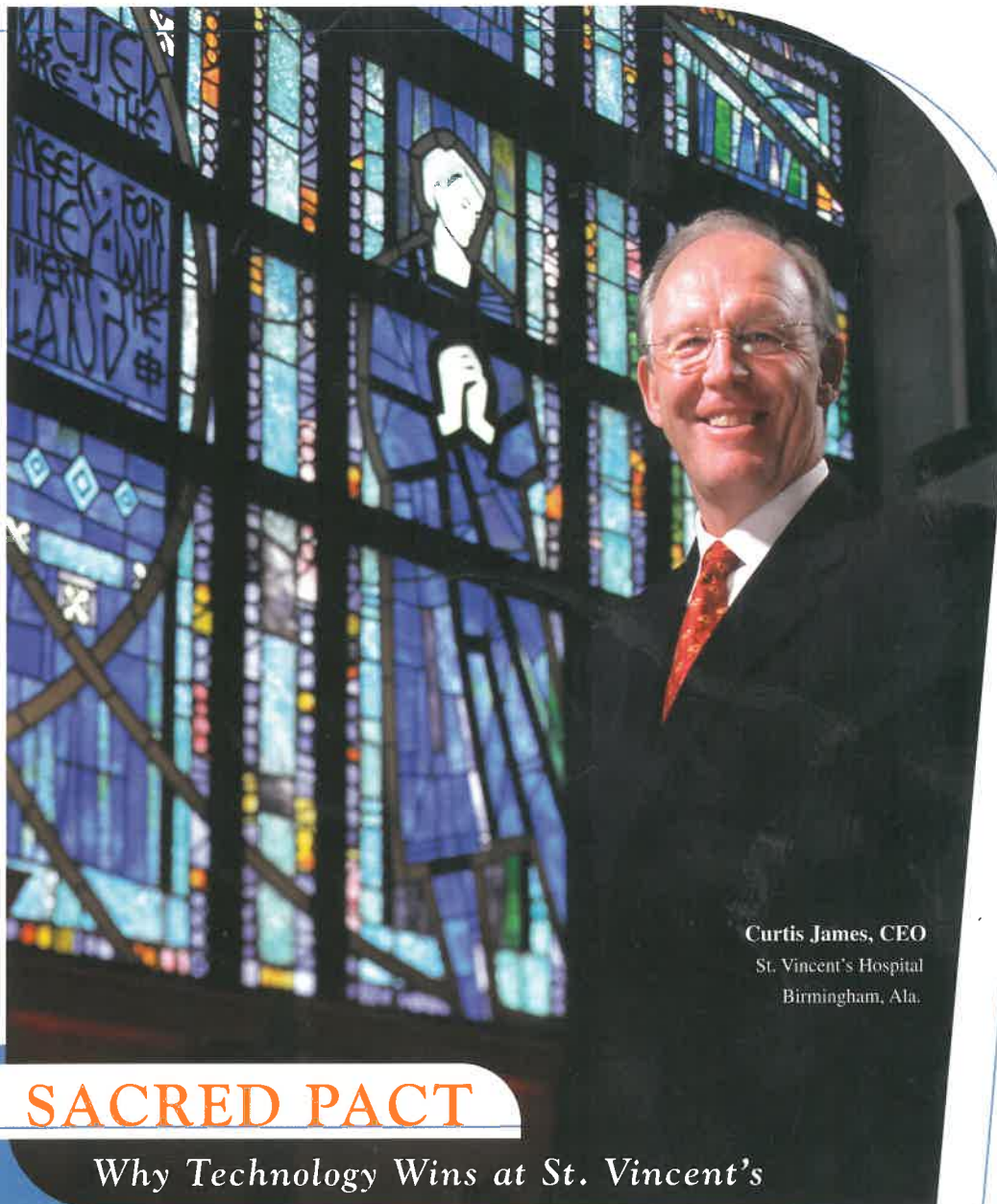


ANSWERS

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A SACRED PACT

Why Technology Wins at St. Vincent's

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Why Technology Wins at St. Vincent's



HIGH-MINDED. *St. Vincent's CEO Curtis James developed a technology vision to elevate his hospital's noble mission.*

Anyone who has ever worked in customer service knows that, generally speaking, people are more apt to complain than praise. It's human nature. So when Curtis James, CEO of St. Vincent's Hospital in Birmingham, Ala., returned to a stack of mail after the holidays last year, he saw the tell-tale signs of a complaint letter: the envelope was hand-addressed, the letter typed and lengthy. James braced himself before reading it.

The letter was from a patient's son. His mother had been admitted to St. Vincent's through the ER that December. The letter started, "I want to tell you what happened to her," and James still expected the worst. But as he continued to read, he started seeing all of the names of St. Vincent's employees involved in the care of this patient. In the last paragraph, the man reported that his mother had died on Christmas Day, and he wanted to thank James for the dignity, kindness and superb care the hospital staff gave to her during her last days.

At St. Vincent's Hospital, human nature is marked by compassion, charity, and yes, technology. James believes there is an unbreakable link between the hospital's commitment to its community and its commitment to technology. Part of Ascension Health, the hospital's mission of touching the lives of those it serves can't be separated from the technology that enables achieving that mission. It's his sacred rule.

"If you ask anybody in our community who St. Vincent's Hospital is, they would say, 'oh, that's the high-touch hospital.' We measure success in healthcare by whether we have made a difference in the lives of those we touch, and the only way I know to do that is through technology," says James. "High tech enables us to do high touch."

Long before most community hospitals envisioned an electronic medical record (EMR) – and long before "digital" became part of the lexicon for IT automation – James (at that time, CFO of St. Vincent's) was already

building and then implementing an EMR at Birmingham's oldest hospital. The year was 1991, and it's a journey that has grown to include a bevy of McKesson's advanced clinical systems. Systems that have increasingly provided first data, then information, and now knowledge to physicians, nurses and other caregivers so that the right clinical decision is made at the most appropriate time to improve the clinical outcome of the patient.

Capital, Capacity, Consumerism

Supported by the 2,000 St. Vincent's Hospital employees, James envisioned a technology strategy that most healthcare IT vendors hadn't yet built the solutions to accomplish. At the heart of his vision was the desire to eliminate all of the hospital's manual processes to achieve better efficiency and patient outcomes.

"Has technology made a difference?" James asks rhetorically. "Absolutely. Capital spent on technology has made a difference in our ability to deliver better clinical outcomes, to be more efficient and more consumer-focused, and to have a better

handle on our operations. And, it's made a difference when we look at our standing in our marketplace. Patient satisfaction is extremely high, employee satisfaction is extremely high — and our technology from McKesson is unquestionably a strong contributor to that.”

With constant growth in patient population and services at the 338-bed hospital, James and his executive team are challenged to find the capacity to meet their mission of providing quality care for anybody in need. In addition to installing IT systems from McKesson, St. Vincent's is solving its current capacity crunch with a \$120 million master facility plan to completely redesign healthcare delivery for inpatient and outpatient services.

The campus expansion includes a new patient tower complete with consumer-driven services such as room service and family suites. James knows that implementing technology also supports the desires of consumers. Information systems such as patient portals provide better consumer access to the hospital and health information and computerized physician order entry (CPOE), automated pharmacy administration, and bar-code scanning at the bedside improve the patient's clinical outcome and safety.

Fully Deployed

After taking a giant step on its own with the self-development of an EMR that allowed physicians to sign charts online, St. Vincent's partnered with McKesson for a clinical data repository in 1996. The hospital used McKesson's first-generation repository to provide longitudinal patient records and integrated real-time vitals and viral and other reports. Today, St. Vincent's is live on McKesson's second-generation clinical repository, Horizon Care Record™.

“The repository was the first step in our move from data points to useful information that combines both current visit analysis and previous encounters,” explains St. Vincent's vice president and CIO Tim Stettheimer. “The problem with data is it's isolated, so it's not connected.

“Information, on the other hand, is meaningful and is available where you need it. From information, you can still progress to what we say now is the last stage in a successful digital evolution, which is knowledge,” he continues. “Knowledge means that a physician doesn't have to take the step of trying to piece information together. The most relevant information converges at the point of care so that the appropriate and best decisions get made right then.”

Happily for St. Vincent's, the hospital has entered the last stage with the implementation of many of McKesson's clinical systems including Horizon Expert Orders™ for advanced clinical decision support and CPOE.

However, Stettheimer, a Ph.D., stops short of labeling the hospital as “fully” digital. “You're never totally there, because the boundaries of technology are always expanding,” he says.

But if any organization is close, it's St. Vincent's. It has an EMR, a clinical data repository, medical imaging, bar-code scanning for medication administration at the bedside, and now CPOE, with plans for the system to be 100 percent housewide by year-end and processing the majority of orders.

McKesson has also provided solutions in the surgical suite, an area that in Stettheimer's mind cannot be left out of the digital equation. “If you leave out the OR, you leave out the majority of your clinical outcomes,” he states. “We have McKesson's Horizon Surgical Manager™ solution fully deployed, including systems such as anesthesia monitoring.



HIGH-TOUCH. Vice President of Patient Care Services Cindy Williams, R.N. (right), oversees the patient “touch” at St. Vincent's, a job made easier with systems like medication bar-code scanning at the bedside.

"The solution is not only fully integrated into our actual OR processes but also with our other clinical systems," he continues. "We are providing the right pre-surgery information and then feeding continuous documentation between our surgical department and the rest of the hospital. We're closing the loop in the OR to ensure a complete circle of care for the patient."

With nothing left to chance in the OR, St. Vincent's adopted a similar policy for medication management, rolling out McKesson's Horizon Expert Documentation™ and Horizon Admin-Rx™ medication administration solutions. With bar-code scanning at the point of care, Stettheimer points out that the hospital can stop errors in their tracks. "Statistics told us that without a safety check at the point of medication administration, there was a 98 percent chance the medication would actually be administered. That's why we started at the point of administration with bar-code scanning to act as a barrier to making an error."



HIGH-TECH. *Wireless technology at St. Vincent's keeps physicians like hospitalist Mark Mardia (right) on the go and on the mark with clinical outcomes. Dr. Mardia and Dr. William Leitner, vice president of Medical Affairs, evaluate a new lab report in Horizon Expert Orders.*

From the bedside, St. Vincent's moved backward in the medication management process and tackled pharmacy workflow with the Horizon Meds Manager™ pharmacy information solution. The system automatically checks for allergies and other drug interactions and alerts the pharmacist to any problems prior to distributing the medication. St. Vincent's also uses McKesson's Horizon Care Alerts™ to monitor all clinical data and proactively notify caregivers of any health situation that needs immediate attention.

The final step in closing the loop on medication errors at St. Vincent's was initiated at the end of March with the implementation of Horizon Expert Orders. Hospitalists are using wireless tablet PCs to access the system through McKesson's Horizon^W™ Physician Portal. Their ability to eliminate transcribing errors in the ordering stage – and to get STAT orders where they need to go more quickly – is expected to contribute greatly to Ascension Health's systemwide goal of zero preventable deaths or injuries by fiscal year 2008.

"To accomplish our overarching goal, we must concentrate on eliminating adverse drug events (ADEs)," says Stettheimer. "We know that medication errors occur and that we need to eliminate those, and with Horizon Clinicals™, we're on track to accomplish our goal."

Information systems are also improving clinical outcomes at St. Vincent's in terms of length of stay. Since beginning its digital journey, length of stay for patients has been reduced a total of 10,000 days. Stettheimer attributes the reduction to implementing technology that allows the hospital to change and improve processes as well as technology that enables physicians and nurses to make better, faster decisions.

Enabling Adoption

A key success factor to ensuring physicians and nurses accept the technology at St. Vincent's is mobility. The hospital went live in 2002 on a wireless network – at that time the largest in the Southeast – that covers the entire 1 million-square-foot campus. The network provides wireless PDA access to patient data in the clinical data repository, allowing physicians to see vital signs, medication administration, lab results and more in real time. Physicians can also access Horizon Expert Orders through one of 50 wireless tablets earmarked for CPOE, and the hospital provides tablets and wireless carts for patient registration in the ER and in some patient rooms.

Previous IT successes also have paved the way for strong physician adoption, according to William Leitner, M.D., St. Vincent's vice president of Medical Affairs. "We've been at this for more than

10 years now, and we've gradually shown the physicians that the IT systems are more efficient than our previous practices and they do make life easier. Today, physicians can access just about anything they want – lab results, X-ray results, pathology reports – everything that we have in the database."

On staff at St. Vincent's since his days as a medical student in 1963, Dr. Leitner says systems like Horizon Expert Orders make St. Vincent's a much more efficient operation with enhanced patient care. "Let's face it, if a physician gets the information in a hurry, he or she can do a much better job taking care of the patient. It is much easier to be 'high touch' if you've got everything at your fingertips."

When Cindy Williams, R.N., took the position as vice president of Patient Care Services at St. Vincent's three years ago, she was impressed with how widely accepted the hospital's vision was among physicians, nurses and other clinical staff. Nurses were comfortable and accustomed to documenting electronically with a paperless chart, in part because they've been at this for so long but more importantly because of St. Vincent's IT strategy. "We look at redesigning work processes to save time, improve the outcome of care and reduce the chance of error — and then we apply information technology to support the processes," Williams says.

She knows that the use of IT at St. Vincent's makes those entrusted with the care of patients feel more assured that they have the tools they need for the most complete and safest care. Nurses tell her so.

"I was in an unrelated meeting and one of the nurses changed the subject to the benefits of bar-code scanning," recalls Williams. "She started telling me about how the system saves her time and how it has changed her interactions with patients. The nurse said, 'While I'm doing the scanning and its being automatically documented for me, I can actually talk to the patient. I can tell them about the drug, about the safety of our system and what it's doing.'"

That's just the kind of story James lives to hear. "When people look at St. Vincent's, they see a growing organization that pays attention to the needs of our patients, our physicians, our nurses. We're not about to leave anyone behind," he confirms.

From advancing the health of its poor to advancing the breadth of its technology, St. Vincent's is a place where human touch and human technology go hand in hand. One is by nature, the other necessity. It's a sacred pact. ♦



Getting Ready for CPOE

The word is out. CPOE is extremely complex — but it can also be extremely successful.

St. Vincent's Vice President and CIO Tim Stettheimer (*above*) outlines what it takes.

STRATEGY

It starts with a vision and strong and sustained executive leadership. You need an actual roadmap that links into and aligns with your organizational direction and strategy. It's going to cost money. If you don't plan for that, you're not going to do it.

PEOPLE

You've got to have the right people on board in a cross-organizational fashion to make it happen, including physicians, pharmacy and nursing. Physicians need to be involved early in the planning and decision-making over content, methods and workflow. We had 100 physicians heavily involved in constructing order sets.

CULTURE

The technology is important, but what's even more important is forming a culture that is accepting of technology. St. Vincent's cultivated the culture first, bringing in the stakeholders who understood the value of the technology and would take ownership for it. Technology is not the goal; it's simply the tool to achieve the goal of improved care. ♦