

Workflow Automation Pays Off For St. Anthony's Regional

This case study highlights how St. Anthony Regional Hospital & Nursing Home reduced printing costs and increased operational efficiency by automating manual form workflows using e-forms software.

By John Centofanti on behalf of FormFast



Located in Carroll, Iowa, St. Anthony Regional Hospital & Nursing Home is a hospital system with 99 patient beds, 79 nursing home beds, six rural clinics, an OB/GYN clinic, and a family practice within the hospital. St. Anthony CIO Randy Eischeid selected FormFast's software, FastFlow, as an enterprise-wide solution for managing the complex cycle of patient data.

St. Anthony had already been using Meditech Magic and was in the process of upgrading to Meditech 6.0. During the upgrade, Eischeid had investigated solutions to reduce printing costs for forms, and increase efficiency in transfer of patient data between departments and divisions throughout the hospital system.

Prior to implementing FastFlow, St. Anthony mass printed a variety of forms, completed them manually, and routed these hard copies to one or more areas within the hospital. The hospital needed an efficient system that eliminated the need to print blank forms in advance. FastFlow integrates with Meditech, which allows forms to be printed within the Meditech system.

FormFast produces electronic workflow solutions, utilized by over 800 hospitals including Cleveland Clinic and the Mayo Health System. Their software suite, FastFlow, allows hospital staff in any department to enter patient data, electronically sign forms, route the forms to multiple departments, and print the completed form when necessary. This allows any department in the system to easily and quickly access electronic medical records, without the delay and expense of routing hard copies.

One way St. Anthony uses FastFlow is for patient admissions. Data is entered, and the forms are electronically routed to the nursing or ancillary areas, depending on the type of patient. The hospital system also uses complimentary FormFast software called FormImprint. Once other departments receive electronic forms, they can print the completed form. Unlike traditional pre-printed forms, FastFlow prints directly from its system without having to load pre-printed forms into a printer.

This reduction in printing expenses has been significant. Previously, any time even minor changes were required on a form, it resulted in forms having to be printed again and older, outdated forms to be discarded. Now, standard printer paper is used and completed patient forms are then printed on demand. St. Anthony still prints forms and uses the electronic data as a backup. Forms can also be changed as necessary, with no costs incurred from reprinting blank forms.

AT A GLANCE

Problem: St. Anthony mass printed a variety of forms and manually completed and routed these forms throughout the hospital enterprise. This manual workflow was costly and inefficient.

Solution: St. Anthony installed FastFlow, an electronic forms automation package from FormFast that integrated seamlessly with Meditech 6.0. The e-forms solution allows the hospital to enter patient data onto a digital form and route the form electronically all via the Meditech system.

Results: Since installing FastFlow, St. Anthony has seen a significant decrease in printing costs and an increase in operational efficiency. In addition, the e-forms solution also helps to ensure all patient data is kept secure.

Two key benefits of FastFlow are its scalability and its ease of integration with older systems.

ACCESS CONTROL, EASE-OF-USE, AND SCALABILITY KEY FACTORS IN FORMS AUTOMATION



While designing forms can be accomplished using Microsoft or Adobe applications, Randy Eischeid, CIO of St. Anthony Regional Hospital, feels it is much easier to design forms using FastFlow.

Another advantage of the Fastflow implementation is that the software is rules-based. This allows Eischeid or his staff to assign each employee to a role within the software, such as HR Director or Operations Manager. The rules establish access control, document routing, and similar functions. When there is staff turnover or new employees are hired, they are assigned roles in one area of the software, which are updated throughout the system. Eischeid says this is much easier to manage given the number of employees in the system at any time.

While designing forms can be accomplished using Microsoft or Adobe applications, Eischeid feels it is much easier to design a form using FastFlow. This is because the software contains an easy-to-use form designer that was developed specifically for medical facilities.

Two key benefits of FastFlow are its scalability and its ease of integration with older software systems. Eischeid said if the hospital system were to double, the software could grow with the enterprise without requiring significant hospital resources to implement. The hospital's upgrade from Meditech Magic to Meditech 6.0 did not affect the usability of FastFlow. Even with multiple divisions and departments, Eischeid main-

tains the implementation caused no interruption to daily operations. Furthermore, FormFast provided a dedicated project manager to St. Anthony's who coordinated efforts between the staff at both companies to keep the project moving forward. This included weekly status calls to address progress and potential issues.

As you might expect, an operational change of this extent was met with a degree of resistance. One of the largest hospital departments expressed concern with the implementation process interfering with operational efficiency. The Admissions Department, being smaller, agreed to be the first to try FastFlow. They liked it so much that other departments, including OB/GYN and In-Patient Mental Health, then started to demand to have FastFlow installed. FastFlow is now used throughout the entire hospital system.

FastFlow works well in the niche market of medical facilities. Eischeid viewed a demo of FastFlow at a trade show and was impressed with its capabilities and the efficiencies it delivered. Knowing most hospitals face the same challenges, he called on several colleagues for references, and each recommended FastFlow.

Reduced printing costs alone made FastFlow worth the investment for St. Anthony's. The greater benefit is the operational efficiency FastFlow delivers. This, combined with the added security the solution delivers provides St. Anthony's with substantial ROI.

