

Case Study: Puget Sound Blood Center

Puget Sound Blood Center is an independent, community-based nonprofit with a tradition of blending volunteerism, medical science and research to improve the patients' lives. Patients with leukemia, cancer, burns, hemophilia and traumatic injuries depend on Blood Center research. The recognized leader in transfusion medicine, the Blood Center operates the world's largest transfusion service, serves patients in more than 70 hospitals and clinics in 14 Western Washington counties, and provides tissue and transplantation support to 185 hospitals across the Northwest.

Challenges

The Blood Center maintains 18 mobile vehicles that collect blood donations throughout western Washington. On any given day, the mobile units travel all over the western part of the state between Canada and Oregon. Each unit has two wireless laptops: one for donor registration and one for back-end processing. Each laptop connects across the Sprint cellular data network and uses RSA authentication and secure ID to allow access to the system.

The Blood Center required a remote access solution that gave the blood technicians secure and continuous connectivity to transmit critical donor information collected at the mobile units. Data from the mobile vehicle laptops tied into the IBM iSeries mainframe operated from their central headquarters in Seattle. The Blood Center uses a Citrix Access Gateway which has a wireless mobile component to allow data communication across available cellular networks. Whenever the mobile unit lost coverage, even just for a split second, the connection link between the client applications used by the field technicians and the IBM mainframe would terminate. The result was dropped data communication and system time outs. In addition, the iSeries mainframe would shut down after 60 minutes.

Out in the mobile units, technicians had to reconnect and re-login to their network connection and diagnose technical issues all before working with blood donors. "These problems impacted our blood technicians' jobs," explained Kiefer Atkins, Information Technical Analyst. "Instead of focusing on blood drive donors, they had to deal with technical networking issues unrelated to their job functions."

"The benefits of Mobility XE are clear. Now our blood technicians can focus on their main function, which is to draw blood, rather than dealing with connectivity issues."

— Kiefer Atkins,
Information Technical Analyst

Organization

Puget Sound Blood Center

Industry

Healthcare

Challenges

- Mobile blood unit technicians needed to re-login and re-enter data due to application crashes when devices lost network connectivity
- Current VPN not designed for intermittent coverage conditions

Solution

- Mobility XE VPN solution
- Sprint cellular data service cards

Results

- Mobility XE kept application sessions alive through wireless coverage gaps
- Released blood technicians from having to perform diagnoses on technical issues making them more productive

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Objective

Puget Sound Blood Center looked to NetMotion Wireless for a solution to help them overcome the challenges presented by the critical need for reliable connectivity. To help make the decision, Atkins conducted a side-by-side comparison between Citrix Access Gateway and NetMotion Wireless' Mobility XE™ mobile VPN. "The comparison took place in an area of the state that is historically a geographic dead spot," added Atkins. "The Citrix Gateway could not get connected while NetMotion Mobility XE connected right away and kept connected. The decision was easy after that."

Solution

After implementing Mobility XE, the blood technicians are now able to transmit information to the mainframe in a secure, continuous data stream all day. When the mobile units move into an area lacking wireless coverage or through periods of intermittent coverage, Mobility XE maintains the application connections on both the laptops and with the mainframe. When coverage is re-established, Mobility XE seamlessly re-links the mobile device with the IBM mainframe to provide a continuous connected state. From the technicians perspective, they no longer have to deal with inadvertent disconnects or having to re-login and re-open applications.

Next Steps

In the early part of 2009, the Blood Center plans to implement remote management capabilities within Mobility XE to better manage and control device updates while devices are in the field.

"The benefits of Mobility XE are clear", concludes Atkins, "now our blood technicians can focus on their main function, which is to draw blood, rather than dealing with connectivity issues."

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