

## Now powering the e-health revolution: your local cable company

*For enterprises and small practices alike, cable's a rising star on the healthcare IT scene. Here's why.*

March 2015

### Part 1 in a SmartBrief series

By Stewart Schley

The “e” in “e-Health” is supposed to stand for “electronic.” But CIOs of major health-care organizations occasionally substitute another adjective: “exhausted.”

An historic convergence of technology innovations, regulatory requirements and economic demands is pressuring industry CIOs to accomplish more critical tasks in less time than ever before. “The norm is there’s really not a slow period anymore in anyone’s lives,” CHIME CEO Russell Branzel [commented recently](#) to *Healthcare IT News*. “I think that’s very true for the healthcare professionals, and particularly the health IT professionals out there.”



It’s within this context of rising demand for IT dexterity that a new entrant on the scene has emerged: the cable telecommunications company. Armed with high-capacity, fiber-rich networks for connecting providers, patients and facilities across the healthcare ecosystem, cable companies are rising to the IT challenge not only by providing new solutions, but by bringing to the market a much-needed quality: the ability to make things easier.

A combination of owned-and-operated facilities, advanced technologies and localized support makes this possible. Unlike other communications providers, cable companies supply mission-critical healthcare technology solutions across the healthcare spectrum – for providers and patients alike – through a single-source, highly responsive and localized service infrastructure.

As a result, healthcare organizations that turn to cable providers attain highly advanced networking and communications capabilities, often saving money in the process. In Rhode Island, for instance, the non-profit behavioral health services provider Gateway Healthcare estimates its operating costs declined 15 percent after the deployment of a customized, hosted voice platform from the cable company Cox Business. “Cox Business has relieved us of the responsibility of being telecommunications experts, allowing us to focus on our primary mission of assisting people in their recovery from mental health, substance abuse and behavioral and emotional disorders,” said Gateway’s Chief Financial Officer.

One of the reasons cable companies are able to seemingly do the impossible – pair improved operations agility with reduced communications and infrastructure costs – is because they invest in and control their own infrastructures. Cable companies own and manage their own data networks, they create and deploy the products that depend on them, they employ the local service teams that support them, and they offer one-stop access to all of these resources.

For healthcare providers like Southern Illinois Healthcare in Carbondale, Ill., which engaged Mediacom Business to provide advanced communications capabilities over a dedicated fiber network that means rapid implementation at reduced costs. “The advantage we had with Mediacom was that a lot of the technology was already there,” explained the organization’s Manager of Infrastructure Systems in [this video profile](#). “Being the cable provider of the area they had fiber in the ground. All that was required was to go that last mile to make that final connection to our facilities. We were able to save a lot of money, and we got a better product.”



For business partners ranging from one-physician practices to regional healthcare conglomerates, these essential qualities set cable companies apart in a crowded communications marketplace. In turn, this holistic capability set gives IT specialists greater assurance not only that locally managed support will be there whenever it's needed, but that solutions can scale along with an organization's requirements.

The "scale" issue in particular is a big reason why cable companies are winning more business in the healthcare category. One recent example: Nizhoni Health Systems of Massachusetts. In March, the large home healthcare agency [selected Comcast Business](#) to connect its 11 locations across the state over a unified network supporting both data and voice requirements. "As our physicians and partner organizations increasingly interact via voice and video, we needed a network that gave us sufficient capacity with the flexibility to scale up quickly whenever needed," said Nizhoni's Chief Information Officer Jim Graham.

Cable certainly does that. Advanced Ethernet networks available from almost all major U.S. cable companies allow for rapid, flip-of-the-switch capacity additions and dynamic bandwidth management that aligns with user needs.

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