HCF Management, Inc., was founded in 1968 by a small group of concerned individuals who saw a need for compassionate and rehabilitative care for the sick and elderly. Today the family-owned company, which operates 27 nursing homes and 5 assisted living facilities in Ohio and Pennsylvania, is recognized as a leader in quality long-term care. HCF strives to create an atmosphere in which every resident feels comfortable and well attended.

The situation

The company’s commitment to providing compassionate care led to steady growth, and HCF today employs more than 5,000 people. Its philosophy has not changed over its 50 years of existence, but the technology that its staff uses to improve residents’ and outpatients’ quality of life has evolved significantly. To help provide that medical communications are as well protected as the residents in its care, HCF sought to enhance the security of its mobile devices, internet interactions, and email systems.

About HCF Management, Inc.

HCF (Heath Care Facilities) Management, Inc., was founded in 1968 by a small group of concerned individuals who saw a need for compassionate and rehabilitative care for the sick and elderly. Today the family-owned company, which operates 27 nursing homes and 5 assisted living facilities in Ohio and Pennsylvania, is recognized as a leader in quality long-term care. HCF strives to create an atmosphere in which every resident feels comfortable and well attended.
Solution

The proactive HCF Information Technology team chose IBM MaaS360 from AT&T to help manage mobile devices, increase productivity and security, and reduce compliance risks. The team also added AT&T Secure Email Gateway to filter out known and suspected threats before they reach the company network and AT&T Cloud Web Security to add near real-time protection against viruses, malware, and other threats. The solutions have added levels of security and support for HCF’s devices, email, and internet.

Half a century of compassionate care

Since 1968 HCF has worked to provide the very best care to residents, and the best possible quality of life for residents, families, and employees. The company recently celebrated 50 years of service to Ohio residents. While much has changed over the last 5 decades, executive vice president Bruce Schroeder says the one thing that has stayed the same is their care for the community.

“One of our main focuses is to be a part of the community,” Schroeder says. “We really care about our patients and their families first, then our employees and our vendors, and our philosophy is we want to be a part of the community.” The company’s focus on delivering excellent services includes a promise to create an atmosphere filled with “fun, love, and meaningful engagement” for residents, where staff take the time to get to know each resident.

HCF’s high standards were established by its founders, which included Richard Unverferth, who ran the company for years with a keen business sense and easy-going leadership style. His son Jim Unverferth served HCF in many different roles for nearly 2 decades before taking over as president and owner in 1995, a position he continues to hold. He has faithfully upheld the founders’ goals of providing compassionate care, even in today’s complicated healthcare marketplace.

Jim Unverferth believes the company’s continuing success is due to the hard work of a large group of dedicated employees who believe in the company and share its vision of enhancing the quality of life of residents, families, and employees.
HCF distinguishes itself from other care facilities by the strong support it provides to residents of the communities in which it operates. It started the Lending Hands Foundation, a non-profit corporation designed to offer financial assistance to HCF employees in need of help. Another example of the company’s philanthropic approach is the annual golf scramble it holds to benefit the Educational Foundation of Ohio Health Care Association; the event has funded more than 176 scholarships to students who want to pursue a career in healthcare.

“HCF is very community oriented,” says Kyle Unverferth, an IT specialist for the company his grandfather started and his father leads today. In addition to its foundation and golf scramble, the company funds 3 major charity requests each year, and often invites the community into its facilities for movie nights, fairs, and other events.

Protecting residents’ data

As in most industries, technology has become a vital part of healthcare today. HCF uses connected technology to support operations, including the complicated reporting that is required of nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

“We do lots of reporting, and our software is cloud-based, so we really depend on the internet,” Kyle Unverferth said, adding that much of the reporting and HCF’s other communications are conducted by email. “This requires stringent security,” he said. “We need encryption to protect our data.”

The company also needed email and web filtering to help prevent employees from inadvertently downloading malware or viruses, and it required security to stop staff or visitors from using the company network to visit streaming sites.

Managing growing numbers of mobile assets

According to Kyle Unverferth, other technology challenges included keeping a reliable inventory of HCF’s communications equipment. “It’s constantly changing,” he said. “Our home health aides use phones and tablets to record and transmit patient data, which is about 400 devices.” Because wireless phones were assigned to individuals, tracking them wasn’t difficult, but tablets were sometimes shared or passed to a colleague as staff changed jobs.
"We had mobile device management software, but the support was terrible," he said. "We wanted to keep better track of phones and tablets and wanted to be able to push apps out to all devices without staff having to turn in the device or do the downloads themselves."

HCF’s IT specialists are well aware that the company depends on them to keep patient information protected and to safeguard company networks and devices against viruses and attacks. "Our systems need to be up and running," Kyle Unverferth said. "If we can’t document our services, we can’t bill for them, which could mean the loss of thousands of dollars per day.” The company needed to strengthen security and support for its devices, email, and internet connectivity.

Extended mobility and continuity

HCF purchased IBM MaaS360 from AT&T to help provide mobile enablement security for its staff. The solution makes it easier to collaborate with colleagues and other healthcare organizations by enabling safer sharing of resident and outpatient information. The solution supports mobile phones and tablets, making it possible for HCF to extend mobility throughout its organization.

IBM MaaS360 from AT&T provides a high level of security across devices, apps, content, and users, which has allowed the company to reduce the cost and complexity of managing its mobile assets and to help provide for compliance with policies and regulations.

Choosing AT&T Secure Email Gateway gave HCF industry-leading inbound and outbound email security with advanced threat detection. It’s cost-effective, since there’s no hardware or software to buy, manage, or maintain.

“Email is a big thing, because so much of what we do is communicated by email,” Kyle Unverferth said. “We need email security because of sensitive patient information. The encryption helps to secure our data.”

Finally, AT&T Cloud Web Security Service helps protect HCF’s network against viruses, malware, and other online dangers. It was an easy choice for HCF’s lean IT team, as there is no equipment to install or maintain.

With AT&T Cloud Web Security Service, HCF’s network is better protected from viruses and malware and against compromised websites. It also gives the company better control of the web apps its staff uses. Nathan Meyer, an IT specialist, said the cloud-based program works well. "We haven't had any problems since we switched to AT&T Cloud Web Security Service," he said.
Outstanding service, value, and security

AT&T is a welcomed ally in HCF’s efforts to support its residents, staff, and community. Meyer and others agreed that the AT&T account teams are proactive and responsive. “They always get back to us right away, and keep the ball rolling,” Meyer said.

According to Kyle Unverferth, the cost-effectiveness of the AT&T services is important to HCF, especially considering the ever-increasing costs of providing care. “The healthcare industry is tightening,” he said. “Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements are not the greatest, so we have to work to keep costs down.”

HCF faces the future with more confidence, thanks to the value and additional levels of security and support AT&T provides for its devices, email, and internet. The solutions support HCF’s vision of being the best healthcare provider by constantly improving resident care, employee development, and business results in the communities it serves.