

Case Study

Hosparus

Client

Hosparus is a leading non-profit hospice care provider in Kentucky and Southern Indiana, serving more than 5,000 patients annually in five locations. Hosparus employs more than 450 employees across 26 counties in their region.

Hosparus' previous training program offered a variety of training sessions on mandatory care topics. Training was delivered via in-person inservices and self-study sessions where content was videotaped and sent out to employees for completion. All course grading, tracking, and reporting was done manually by the Education Team.

Challenges

Inservices Involved Time, Effort, and Expense

To meet mandatory training needs required by a hospice environment, Hosparus offered an in-depth slate of inservices. However, according to Joy Berger, Director of Education, "We would have one topic for training, and between scheduling the session multiple times for multiple sites, it could take up to two months for a course to be completed from first offering to final completion." The self-study program offered more flexibility but courses still had to be prepared, taped, and sent out to employees. Tracking was also cumbersome: "Courses were mailed out and back via interoffice mail, then we graded, tracked, and followed up with managers manually."

CHALLENGES

- Traditional inservices involved too much time, effort, and money
- Employees needed more flexibility to accommodate care schedules
- Previous technology launches had been difficult

With multiple sessions and most employees working in the field, the expense for inservices was costly. Hosparus reimbursed employees for mileage to travel to inservices; some employees drove 30-60 minutes for training and inservices could take anywhere from 60-90 minutes. "The expense of the 'get to' time for employees was adding up," she says.

"You have to balance inservices with patient needs."

- Joy Berger,
Director of Education, Hosparus

Employees Needed Flexibility

With Hosparus being a 24/7 business and a workforce of field employees, the timing of inservices wasn't working. "When we schedule a training, that's

taking an employee away from someone who is dying, away from the patient's family," says Joy, "So you have to balance inservices with patient needs." The average length of stay for a hospice patient is two weeks and involves immediate care and crisis care. Because of the nature of hospice care, "it was important for us to protect a certain level of flexibility in our employees' schedules," she says.

Hosparus' part-time employees "have to receive the same level of training full-time employees do, because of the nature of the care we provide," says Joy. Scheduling training for those who already work limited hours was proving to be a challenge.

Hosparus needed streamlined training to allow for flexibility and deliver cost savings; however, "ultimately our goal is to provide the highest quality of care in a safe environment," she says. Hosparus knew the right training system could help them further that goal.

Past Attempts to Launch Training Technology Weren't Successful

Hosparus embraced the idea of online learning, but launching a system had proven tough. Hosparus had spent a year trying to launch an online learning system with another provider, but the system never fully launched. Courses were also offered through another online system, but they didn't offer the complete learning management system needed.

Results

Online Learning Saves Time and Money

Hosparus launched their Silverchair system in November 2009 and saw immediate results in time and money spent developing and delivering courses.

Time To Complete Inservices*

Before Silverchair	With Silverchair
60-90 minutes	30 minutes

** including travel*

“The time savings is amazing,” says Joy. “An in-person inservice that took 90 minutes is now done in about half the time.” Since all assignments, reports, and tracking are done within the system, it’s easy to keep track of compliance. Other features have helped save time as well: “A great feature for us has been the Authoring Tool,” she says. “The simplicity of loading our own materials was HUGE.”

Hosparus has also seen cost savings in terms of paying for travel to inservices: “By my conservative estimate, I would say we’ll save about \$5000 per inservice topic.”

Employees Gain Training Flexibility

Now that employees can train anywhere on their own time, care givers can spend more time with patients and can balance training with patient care. Part time employees can also receive training on their own schedule.

Hosparus employees have taken to the system easily; since launching in November 2009, employees have logged more than 1,000 hours on the system. “Our employees are taking advantage of the CE courses and the Electives feature—they are so excited about that,” Joy adds.

The system has also helped the Education Team gain flexibility.

“Silverchair’s pre-written courses are great,” she says. “When a need is identified, we can make a course quickly, and the test questions ensure that our employees understand the content.” Elaine Kersting, Hosparus’ Clinical Educator, has been able to adapt Silverchair courses for these needs by adding custom content and test questions. Elaine’s first course saw 95% completion within 45 days of launching the course to staff.

Successful Launch and Continuing Support

An easy, smooth launch guaranteed Hosparus’ success. Steven Miller, Hosparus’ Education Coordinator, facilitated the launch effort; Hosparus had the system in place and employees training online in about four months. “We chose to do a slower, incremental rollout, which helped us gain employee acceptance of the system,” he says. “We wanted them to know what was coming.”

The rollout plan included a pilot program at one of the hospices located in a rural area. “We chose a rural area to make sure the technology could work anywhere,” Steven mentions. Personalized user guides were sent to all employees to familiarize them with the system. Employees took their first course, on home health customer service, to test the system and check for potential usage issues. An online education page was then linked to Hosparus’ website. Finally, the system was demonstrated for senior leaders in the organization.

Rolling out the new system to everyone and showing the value to senior leaders got everyone excited—rather than fearful—about online learning. “I had one employee who was really nervous about the system come up to me and say, ‘Don’t tell anyone I told you this, but I really love this system’,” he laughs.

Ongoing support from Silverchair has made the difference for Hosparus. “The customer service has been so amazing,” Steven says. “Every time we had a question or request, Silverchair’s Service Delivery knocked it out of the park.”

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*- Steven Miller,
Education Coordinator, Hosparus*

Conclusion

An online learning management system allowed Hosparus to streamline training, deliver consistent content to employees, and save on time, effort, and labor costs. Employees also appreciate the flexibility of online courses, which helps Hosparus improve patient care.

Hosparus has an ambitious education agenda for the year, including coaching managers on authoring content and delivering courses on organizational goals and policies. The system is also helping Hosparus achieve their quality and service goals: “Silverchair allows us to ensure quality and safety excellence for patients and families, by educating our staff.”

“Anything that can improve efficiency and productivity while reducing operational costs is significant,” Joy says. “To increase employee satisfaction as well is incredible.”

