



## Customer Insights

*A continuing series in which customers discuss their experiences with CareTech Solutions' products and services*

- **Continuum Health Partners**
- **Oakwood Healthcare Inc.**

## The Healthcare-Specific Help Desk

## Different Levels of Service for Different Stages of Electronic Medicine

The CareTech Solutions' Service Desk Maturity Model is a way to gauge where a healthcare organization is in terms of providing IT help desk support for its end users.

*"We wanted a vendor who could be an equal partner, with an on-site relationship. And they had to be healthcare-focused – that was something we were not going to negotiate. We found all that in CareTech Solutions."*

**Eli Tarlow**

Director of IT Service Delivery  
Continuum Health Partners  
New York City, New York

Developed to mirror the HIMSS Analytics EMR Adoption Model, the Service Desk Maturity Model, beginning with Stage 0 (a lack of dedicated support) through Stage 6 (fully structured Service Desk focusing on root cause analysis, cause elimination, service metrics, remote support tools, customer surveys, communication management and more), defines the different levels of IT support hospitals will require as they become more electronic.

In February 2011, the Service Desk Maturity Model was featured in the HIMSS11 track session, "The Healthcare-Specific Help Desk" with Oakwood Healthcare Inc. and Continuum Health Partners sharing their respective journeys to elevate their health systems' IT help desks in preparation for the unique needs of clinical end users as more care-giving technologies came online

### Continuum Health Partners

In 2008 Continuum Health Partners' (CHP) help desk was at a Stage 2. It had some functions in place, but lacked the tools and processes needed to effectively and consistently respond to the increasing number of healthcare-specific end-user queries. The missing elements were:

- **Agents trained in healthcare**
- **Clinical and technical knowledge base**
- **Network performance monitoring tools**
- **Remote control tools**

In order to quickly integrate these elements into CHP's IT support organization, CHP chose to partner with CareTech Solutions. Within the first three months, CHP cited a noticeable improvement in end-user support, and after one year, end-user satisfaction increased dramatically. Noted performance improvements were:

- Employees reached help desk analysts significantly faster.
- Employee abandonment rate dropped dramatically.
- Employees spent less time with help desk analysts.
- Employee issues were resolved on the first call.

By 2010, CHP's hard work and commitment to improving end-user support elevated the IT operation to a Stage 5 Service Desk with extremely satisfied doctors and nurses, and first-call resolution exceeding industry average.

*"Leveraging our ten years of a successful IT help desk, we chose to go with CareTech Solutions' for our physician-only support hotline. Having a clinician-specific help desk was extremely important, since we wanted to use it as a key tool to help us improve physician satisfaction and ultimate loyalty to Oakwood."*

**Paula Smith**

Senior Vice President and CIO  
Oakwood Healthcare Inc.  
Dearborn, Michigan

## Oakwood Healthcare Inc.

Oakwood Healthcare Inc. (OHI) has been a longtime customer of CareTech Solutions, and was one of its first Service Desk clients, launching in 1999 as a Stage 3 (dedicated 24x7x365 help desk with some process documentation) operation.

By 2009, OHI had elevated its IT help desk to a Stage 6 Service Desk. Through the use of data captured from performance monitoring and reporting, OHI continuously improves this IT support function, earning it consistently high end-user satisfaction metrics.

Hospital administrators have been so pleased with IT and its Service Desk performance that they incorporated that success into the hospital's business strategy, focused on building physician loyalty. Located in an extremely competitive market, OHI was looking for new and unique ways to demonstrate its commitment to physicians. One way of doing that was to create a premium level of support for doctors and their staffs.

In 2008 the IT department created a physician-only support line that modeled its Stage 6 Service Desk, and rolled it out along with several other support initiatives for OHI doctors and staff, including:

- **Dedicated IT support line** – perhaps the most significant component. When physicians call, they're not calling into the general IT help desk line; it's a way to hone in on specific questions and provide a resolution as quickly as possible with minimum hassle.
- **Dedicated physician resources** – a "swat team" of sorts, consisting of two or three field technicians stationed in physicians' lounges three or four times a week to work directly with the doctors, answering questions, solving problems, explaining new enhancements to the various clinical systems.
- **Remote access** to OHI patient data for physicians and office staff – including visits to the physicians' offices to train office staff on how to use the systems.
- **Oakwood Connect physician portal** – the physicians now had a single sign-on to get into a variety of applications: one click away to get to a PACs image or EKG monitoring strip, etc.
- **New physician office solution** – packaged an entire solution set for independent and private doctors.

**Oakwood:** When the hospital looked at the statistics and the types of calls that came in on the physician dedicated support line, the following results were evident in the first year:

- Clinicians reached Service Desk staff significantly faster.
- Clinicians' abandonment rate dropped dramatically.
- Clinicians spent less time with Service Desk staff.
- Clinicians' issues were resolved on first call.
- Clinicians developed relationships with dedicated IT support staff.
- Dedicated IT support began to understand clinicians' office workflows.

## In Their Own Words: Lessons Learned, Recommendations Made

*"It took some thinking, some creativity, and a willingness to do things a little bit differently. I'm proud of the Continuum IT department, and the help of CareTech Solutions, to bring us to where we are today with our Service Desk operation."*

**Eli Tarlow**  
Continuum Health Partners

*"While still early in our process, we've built a lot of trust between the physicians and the IT Service Desk staff."*

**Paula Smith**  
Oakwood Healthcare Inc.

In moving from Stage 2 to Stage 5 and partnering with CareTech Solutions, Continuum learned some valuable lessons:

- Raising the overall reputation of your IT department is impossible without a solid healthcare-focused Service Desk.
- Finding a Service Desk solution that meets your high expectations is easier than most people think.
- Selecting a Service Desk partner that demonstrates flexibility and culture-fit is critical.
- Planning for the transition to an outsourcing partner, including baseline customer-focused metrics for ongoing performance, is a must.

In their innovative program to increase physician satisfaction, Oakwood recognized and isolated some very specific recommendations for any other organization that might want to go down the same path:

- For a physician-only hotline, assign a phone number that is easy to remember. This can't be emphasized enough.
- Over-communicate the service, its features and availability, along with the phone number. Physicians' offices were visited with giveaway pens displaying the number and reminder stickers were posted prominently.
- Learn how to manage different levels of service associated with different groups of doctors – employed, credentialed, referring.
- Partner IT physician liaisons with IT physician support line staff to provide enhanced value for clinicians. Relationships are paramount, leading to more personal involvement and understanding.

### Our Valued Customers:

Continuum Health Partners is a nonprofit hospital system in New York City comprised of four service organizations including: Beth Israel Medical Center, Roosevelt Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, and the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary. Combined, these hospitals run 2,727 certified beds.

Oakwood Healthcare Inc. is an independent healthcare system with four acute-care hospitals and 45 primary/specialty care sites. Combined, these hospitals offer a 1,267-bed integrated delivery network and one of Detroit's largest teaching hospital systems.

### The CareTech Solutions Service Desk Maturity Model

Whether your hospital is at a Stage 1 or 5 on the HIMSS Analytic EMR Adoption Model, your end users are expecting and need greater levels of IT service in order to reap the benefits of electronic medicine. Understanding where you are in the adoption of such technologies is the first step in planning for the right levels of IT support.

A copy of the CareTech Solutions Service Desk Maturity Model can be found on [www.caretech.com/resources](http://www.caretech.com/resources).

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