



Southwest Cancer Center

Practice: Southwest Cancer Center

Location: Orlando, FL

Physicians: 5

Patients: 75-100/day

After-hour calls: 15-20/day

SUCCESS STORY

Southwest Cancer Center's answering service replacement improves physician and patient satisfaction with big cost savings

Who's representing your practice — both to your patients and your staff — after-hours? How well are they conducting business on your behalf? It's a question practice leaders must ask themselves, because the answer hits home on three different fronts: staff satisfaction, patient experience and overhead costs.

Answering service mistakes have become status quo for the healthcare industry — especially in small practice settings. There must be a process in place for patients to communicate with staff in the off-hours, and the most common solution has been the traditional answering service — staffed by human beings who, unfortunately, do inevitably make mistakes. Mistakes like delaying the delivery of urgent messages, urgently delivering non-emergent messages and even losing patient messages. This service, which is fraught with opportunity to negatively impact physician and patient satisfaction levels, is also notoriously expensive.

The frustrating status quo

Southwest Cancer Center, a small medical practice in Orlando, specializes in comprehensive cancer treatment and care for 75-100 patients per day. For over five years they employed a traditional after-hours answering service that, unfortunately, came with all the traditional frustrations as well.

“We experienced a lot of issues with the answering service reaching out to our physicians after-hours and over the weekends with non-urgent messages. Our front desk staff was routinely getting yelled at by patients who were frustrated about the lack of response they had received,” said Cara Bertone, practice manager at Southwest Cancer Center. “We weren't happy, and we were looking around at other options.”

“The switch has really been amazing. We’re saving on average around \$1,100 a month.”

Cara Bertone,
practice manager at
Southwest Cancer Center

The physicians at Southwest Cancer Center began using PerfectServe four years ago as a way to communicate and coordinate patient care with interdisciplinary providers from two partner hospitals in the area. In 2016, when Bertone discovered that PerfectServe had the capabilities to automate many of the manual functions of the answering service that were causing the most frustration among patients and providers, she jumped at the chance to learn more.

Convenience, simplicity and savings

“From the start, PerfectServe was really helpful and listened to what our needs were,” said Bertone. “And I knew then that if this could work, I wanted to do it right away.”

Bertone worked with PerfectServe’s professional services team to plan a one-week implementation for the answering service replacement project.

“All I had to do was provide PerfectServe with the physicians’ names and schedules, and determine what language I wanted to use when the phone would be answered after-hours. It was very simple and very easy,” Bertone said.

Contrasted with the manual schedule maintenance of their previous answering service — where Bertone would have to call the service, wait for someone to become available, read the on-call schedule aloud to the representative and then repeat it — the self-service functionality of PerfectServe’s schedule maintenance has been a breeze.

“Right now I just enter the schedule into PerfectServe, and within a few clicks, I am done. I never have to touch it again unless something changes. And if it does, again just a few clicks and I’m done. We couldn’t be happier.”

As a bonus, replacing the traditional answering service has saved the practice on average around \$1,100 a month.

The physicians at Southwest Cancer Center are also extremely happy with the changes.

Physician and patient satisfaction

“With our old service our physicians were getting non-urgent messages in their time off. Now non-urgent messages are delayed until normal business hours,” Bertone said.

“I didn’t even know that PerfectServe had an after-hours answering service option. It is truly the best move we have made.”

Cara Bertone,
practice manager at
Southwest Cancer Center

The physicians also appreciate the fact that all their messages now come through one application. Before their answering service was replaced, providers received messages through multiple apps — creating a lot of unnecessary clicks and sign-ons to manage their messages. Now that PerfectServe has replaced the answering service, physicians receive all communications directly through the PerfectServe app on their smart devices.

“And now that our patient messages are being delivered in real-time directly to the physicians and are no longer delayed until the next day, we’re seeing far fewer patient complaints as well. In a cancer treatment facility, the patient experience is especially important. Everything is a little more emotional. The ease with which our patients can now get in touch with doctors when they need to is so critical to their positive experience with us.

“I really would recommend PerfectServe to any office,” Bertone continued. “I was impressed not only by the answering service replacement, but also by the PerfectServe team’s follow-up after we went live. The professional services rep would follow-up with me via email — she was very easy to get ahold of. There was no chasing my tail trying to reach somebody when I had a question. I can’t say enough about how easy and enjoyable PerfectServe is to work with.”