



# Improving Hospital Transfers

Operations Leader's Guide to Operator Consoles



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## The Value of the Hospital Transfer Center

The transfer center is an invaluable part of a health system’s communication ecosystem, and in many cases, it’s an essential stop on a patient’s journey to receiving care. By design, the transfer center’s goal is to allow physicians to quickly initiate and complete intrafacility and interfacility patient transfers with limited hiccups and expedited communication workflows to smooth the process.

The transfer center of today has come a long way, but legacy on-prem solutions can still make speedy patient transfers difficult to accomplish. Cumbersome workflows, long wait times, inaccurate provider schedules, and overwhelmed operators all contribute to delays in the transfer process. By tapping years of communication and clinical workflow expertise, we’ve devised a guide for the operations leader of today that outlines the key components necessary for improving the hospital transfer center and highlights the functionality many current systems lack. Let’s take a look at how updated features and useful integrations can equip your organization with a modern, more efficient transfer center.

# Challenges in the Transfer Center

## Legacy Systems Can't Keep Up

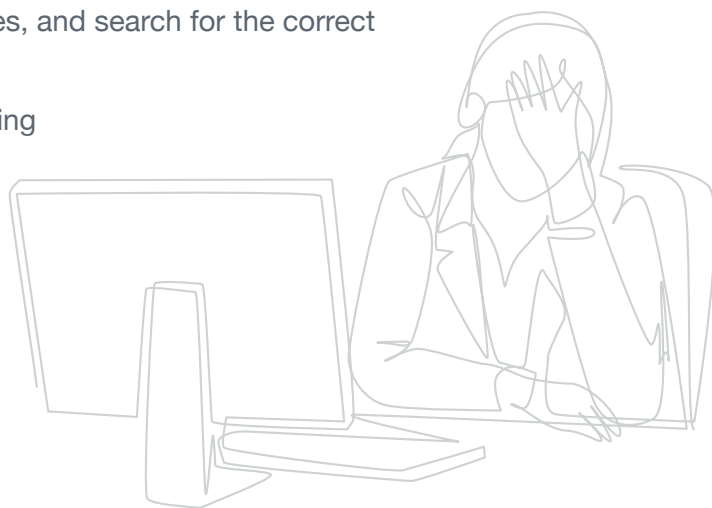
Though transfers are a common process in care delivery, disjointed workflows can cause frustration for the referring provider, operator, and receiving department or healthcare facility. These negative experiences can easily lead to missed transfer opportunities, and over time, the missed opportunities can contribute to revenue loss. Poor patient transfer operations—often inhibited by vaguely defined processes, dated technology with limited functionality, and limited visibility into provider schedules—can lead to a number of undesirable outcomes:

- Lengthy hold times for referring physicians
- Operator queue build up
- Delayed patient care
- Increased referral leakage

## Convoluted Workflows Inhibit Care Delivery

Outdated systems and cumbersome workflows waste valuable operator time and make patient transfers less efficient. With legacy systems, operators often have to use multiple programs to manage call queues, reference directories, and search for the correct provider. Care can then become delayed due to:

- Inability to find the correct on-call and/or receiving physician(s) due to inaccurate schedules
- Time-consuming and error-prone manual directory lookups
- Referring providers hanging up and calling another health system to request a transfer, restarting the entire process
- Operator click fatigue



## Low Message Reliability

Message delivery needs to be reliable to facilitate a timely patient transfer. Legacy systems don't give operators and care team members access to one common communication ecosystem that shows when a message has been successfully sent, delivered, and read. This can create delayed responses and general uncertainty about message delivery/reliability, and it makes it difficult to audit communication trails after the fact. Poor communication “hygiene” often leads to:



- Delayed or missed messages that prevent the transfer process from moving forward
- Increased abandonment rates
- Frustrated referring providers
- Oversight issues
- A lack of deeper understanding about how to improve transfer processes over time





# Evaluate Your Current System

In recent years, and especially since the onset of the COVID pandemic, healthcare organizations have been faced with persistent staffing shortages, dwindling margins, and elevated patient expectations. It's possible that some don't view the transfer center as a prime candidate for process improvements that can lead to significant ROI, but in reality, there are a number of ways transfer operations can be improved to ease some of the challenges healthcare organizations are facing.

We've compiled eight unique capabilities that a modern transfer center operator console should have, along with the ways these features can impact your hospital's day-to-day operations and bottom line. Use the checklist below to identify where your transfer center stands.

## Operations Leader Checklist: Eight Essential Transfer Center Features

Essential Transfer Center Features		My transfer center could benefit from this feature:
<b>Cloud-Based Technology</b>	<p>A cloud-based operator console for the transfer center offers a range of benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff can work from any location, supporting recruitment, employee retention, and decreased usage of sick days</li><li>• Updates over the cloud and no on-prem IT support reduces costs</li><li>• Can become a multichannel contact center</li><li>• Can easily integrate with other clinical software</li><li>• Deploys quickly and updates easily</li><li>• Optimizes agent efficiency</li></ul>	
<b>Modern UX</b>	<p>With legacy and on-prem interfaces, operator workflows are convoluted. This affects patient outcomes with lengthy hold times for callers, delayed patient care, and increased referral leakage.</p> <p>With a modern UX, operators are able to provide high-quality customer service and your transfer center can experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved, faster call-in experience</li><li>• Smoother transitions of care</li><li>• Reduced referral leakage</li><li>• Improved agent and caller satisfaction</li></ul>	

<b>Key IT and Clinical Integrations</b>	<p>By supporting integrations with key IT and clinical systems, your operator console becomes closely connected to the care team. Some top recommended integrations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directory</li> <li>• Schedules</li> <li>• Secure texting</li> <li>• DECT phones</li> <li>• CRM</li> <li>• EHR</li> </ul>	
<b>Scalability</b>	<p>Ensure your growing system meets operational goals, no matter how fast changes come. A scalable, cloud-based transfer center will make it easier to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add or remove users/agents</li> <li>• Cover new/multiple locations</li> <li>• Integrate with new technology without the burden of a heavy price tag</li> </ul>	
<b>Reliability and Uptime Performance</b>	<p>In healthcare, emergencies and interruptions are inevitable. But every time an on-prem transfer center solution is down or being updated, the call-in experience is impaired. In contrast, a cloud-based operator console:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not require on-site IT to upgrade software</li> <li>• No additional costs, no downtime updates</li> <li>• Remains available during power outages, natural disasters, and other emergencies</li> </ul>	
<b>Secure Technology</b>	<p>If the operator console in your transfer center doesn't have robust encryption and comprehensive security measures, your organization's private communications are at risk. A secure transfer center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports secure, encrypted communication</li> <li>• Is HIPAA-compliant</li> <li>• Holds SOC 2 certifications and is audit-ready</li> <li>• Provides analytics with dates and times for sent, received, and read messages</li> </ul>	

### Lower Costs, Smaller Vendor Footprint

Legacy systems may not be integration-friendly, which may force you to seek multiple vendors for crucial capabilities. A modern operator console shouldn't require you to purchase solutions from multiple vendors that still lead to a siloed information system.

Replacing your legacy solution can lead to a number of improvements:

- Seamless connections to existing directories, schedules, and other clinical systems
- A reduced vendor footprint
- No additional charges for software updates
- No servers to manage, custom hardware to buy, or additional IT FTE
- Ability to reduce number of pagers, plans, reliance on overhead paging, and frequency of multiple calls



### Analyst and Customer Validation

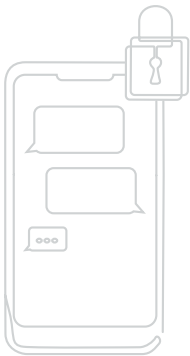
When operators have to use a dated or ineffective system to accomplish their tasks, the daily frustrations can build up over time and negatively impact overall job satisfaction.

Rather than settling for an antiquated system with limited functionality, equip your operators with user-friendly technology from an innovative vendor whose ability to enable effective system-wide communication strategies has been validated by customers and analysts through organizations like:

- KLAS Research
- Gartner
- Black Book



# Essential Transfer Center Integrations



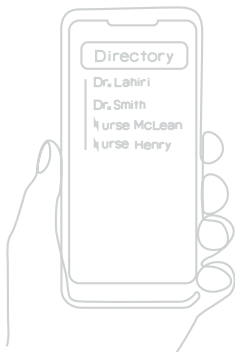
## HIPAA-Compliant Clinical Communication: *Get Messages, Alerts, and Escalations to the Right Provider(s) with Intelligent Routing*

### Improve workflows by:

- Relaying inbound messages as texts or traditional voice messages
- Allowing agents to send messages to clinicians with complete patient details
- Providing visibility about when messages have been delivered and read

### Allow providers to:

- Receive full, context-rich messages instantly on their smartphones
- Respond to callers immediately



## Clinical Directories: *See Contact Information Quickly*

### Directory integration enables:

- A simple click to connect the agent to the clinician via text, call, or page
- Fast connection to hospital departments, unit desks, ambulatory practices, pharmacies, and more
- Flexibility to search for any care team member by name, department, or role across all locations within an organization



## Scheduling Software: *Access Real-Time, Accurate Schedules*

### Integrating with a hospital's scheduling software allows operators to:

- Reliably route calls to the correct clinicians
- See a single, real-time view of the schedule across all departments and locations
- Eliminate the need for paper-based (or otherwise rudimentary) schedules



## Electronic Health Record: *Enhance Workflows Inside the EHR*

### **Consoles with EHR access can:**

- Populate patient information quickly and securely
- Route messages to the patient's on-call nurse, physician, hospital unit clerk, a member of the care team, or directly to the patient's room
- Send secure text messages and attachments to individuals or groups on the patient's care team



## Customer Relationship Management: *Utilize Historical Data*

### **Integrating the operator console and CRM system:**

- Allows the CRM to use caller ID matching for instant identification of the patient and immediate access to call history
- Facilitates faster call resolution to improve the customer experience
- Saves follow-up notes in the CRM to document calls



## Patient Flow Systems: *Manage Patient Transfers Accurately*

### **Integrating with patient flow systems helps with:**

- Aligning care team allocation with patient demand
- Supervision of bed allocation
- Enabling the right teams and resources for inbound patients



## Phone Systems:

### *Access Established Phone Systems*



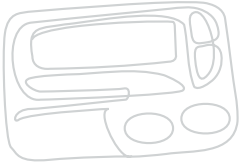
**This integration allows the operator console to dial any type of phone directly, including:**

- PBXs
- Hospital extensions
- Patient rooms
- Other locations within the network

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## Pagers:

### *Work With or Replace Pager Workflows*



**By integrating the operator console with pagers, agents can:**

- Send messages to existing pagers
- Retain pager functionality through replacement, mergers, or acquisitions, or until they are replaced entirely

# New Workflows = Better Results

## USE CASE #1

### Improving Results with Easier Workflows

Sue has an appointment with her primary care provider, Dr. Smith. She presents with a cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue. Dr. Smith examines her and recommends that Sue's daughter take her to the ED for breathing treatments, an X-ray, and additional testing.

Dr. Smith calls the hospital transfer center and is redirected to the ED with the shortest wait time. The operator identifies the appropriate ED for Sue and her daughter to visit. Dr. Smith can then search and securely message the "ED on-call" physician through the PerfectServe platform and let them know Sue is on her way.

#### How is this possible?

PerfectServe's operator console enables this efficient communication workflow with:

- Schedule integration
- Secure messaging integration
- Capability to search by role instead of by name
- Modern UX with all solutions in one console

#### Results:

The seamless process leads to a number of positive results:

- Improved care continuity
- Better patient experience
- Timely call resolution
- Satisfaction for callers and operators



## USE CASE #2

### Seamless Connections for a Direct Admission

Jack has been admitted to a rural hospital after falling at his home. Through X-rays and other testing, it's determined that he needs to be transferred to another hospital where he can have orthopedic surgery to repair his hip. After the orders were placed and the transfer was initiated, Jack's nurse at the rural hospital, Carla, needed to call a report to the nurse on the orthopedic floor at the new hospital.

Carla calls the transfer center at the receiving hospital, where the operator is able to connect her with the receiving unit's charge nurse, Nichole. The details of the patient's needs are captured in a form-based template. Nichole can then review the page, add the nurse who will be receiving the patient to the message, and text back to the operator that the receiving nurse will call the referrer back once they're out of a patient's room and available for report.

If the caller hangs up, PerfectServe's park and page workflow uses the callback number to connect the receiving nurse directly to the caller when they dial into the extension.

#### How is this possible?

PerfectServe's operator console makes this scenario possible with:

- Clinical directory integration
- Secure messaging integration
- EHR integration
- Modern UX with all solutions in one console

#### Results:

The seamless process leads to a number of positive results:

- Care continuity
- Better patient experience
- Timely call resolution
- Satisfaction for callers and operator



## USE CASE #3

### Collaboration Made Possible with an Advanced Operator Console

Roberta went for a stress test Tuesday morning, where it was decided she needed a heart cath STAT. Dr. Kim, Roberta's cardiologist, performs the heart catheterization, but during the procedure, Roberta's condition becomes critical. Dr. Kim decides she needs a balloon pump and to be placed on a vent.

Dr. Kim calls the hospital transfer center in hopes of connecting with the cardiothoracic (CT) surgeon on call to discuss Roberta's admission, surgery, and condition. The operator is able to seamlessly connect Dr. Kim with the CT surgeon on call. The operator also patches in a third collaborator, the OR scheduler, to get Roberta on the schedule for a cardiac bypass.

After hanging up, the operator couldn't remember some of the details from the discussion. To confirm his memory, he's able to reference the notes he took and access a call recording to listen to the call. Roberta is quickly placed in a bed in the cardiac intensive care unit, where she receives care in a timely manner and is placed under observation as she awaits surgery.

#### How is this possible?

PerfectServe's operator console makes this scenario possible with:

- Clinical directory integration
- Secure messaging integration
- EHR integration

#### Results:

The seamless process leads to a number of positive results:

- Faster care delivery
- Improved provider experience
- Timely call resolution



# Deploy Powerful Tools, Deliver Powerful Outcomes

With a modern infrastructure and the right integrations, the operator console becomes a powerhouse for expediting patient transfers, funneling communication, and helping clinics deliver exceptional patient care. For the operations leader, knowing how to optimize transfer center workflows means:



Empowering operators with user-friendly, efficient communication tools



Enhancing the provider experience when requesting referrals, placing calls, and communicating with receiving hospitals



Improving speed to care for patients and their families

**Speak with a Consultant**





[PerfectServe](#) accelerates speed to care by optimizing provider schedules, streamlining clinical communication, and engaging patients and their families in the care experience. Our cloud-based software simplifies complex clinical workflows and schedules with secure and timely communication by dynamically routing messages to the right person at the right time. We drive more efficient care collaboration in all settings to improve patient outcomes and bring joy back to caregivers. PerfectServe has 25 years of experience and is a trusted partner to more than 500 hospitals and 30,000 medical practices.

*To learn more or reserve a demo with an innovative partner, please contact us:*

866.844.548

[sales@perfectserve.com](mailto:sales@perfectserve.com)

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