

PHARMACY BUSINESS CASE

TURN HIPAA COMPLEXITY INTO HIPAA COMPLIANCE

Today's institutional pharmacy providers are facing increasing governmental scrutiny in how they use and exchange protected health information. Operational volume, diversity of client environments, and an increasing interface with acute care are factors that can complicate and threaten the secure exchange of data. The typical pharmacy provider is servicing multiple long term care facilities that combined, span a large number of active residents, each requiring the numerous and frequent transmission of both ePHI & PHI data.



QUICK FACTS:



Over 30 million electronic medical records have been compromised since 2009



Penalties can be up to \$1.5 million over the course of a calendar year



► THE CHALLENGE

While institutional pharmacy providers are experienced in the physical security required for pharmacy operation, the sheer volume and complexity of both electronic and paper data exchanges are much more difficult to control, and therefore make these organizations more vulnerable to security threats and ultimately more susceptible to non-compliance fines and penalties.

Yet it can be very difficult to manage HIPAA security requirements *and* still run your business effectively, since most pharmacy providers simply do not have resources that can be dedicated to research, implement and oversee the numerous and complex federal and state statutes, security best practices and emerging threats. In response, many institutional pharmacy providers have partnered with BlueOrange Compliance to help them turn HIPAA complexity into HIPAA compliance.

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Scott Walker
Remedi Senior Care's CIO



▶ THE PROJECT

Remedi Senior Care is a US-based institutional pharmacy business, serving a growing number of long-term care facilities extending from the Mid-Atlantic to the Midwest. The organization's industry leadership is built upon a philosophy of continuous improvement and customer-inspired innovation. Yet the expanding complexity of a growing client base in an increasingly paperless healthcare world made safeguarding the privacy and security of resident information progressively more challenging.

Scott Walker, Remedi Senior Care's CIO, and chief contributor to this article, recounts his reason for seeking a managed services partner to assist in building security compliance: "We wanted insight and guidance from someone outside of our organization that could help us identify and implement security improvement opportunities." A candidate for this role was BlueOrange Compliance, a national provider of security and privacy risk assessments, analysis, corrective action plans and guidance to healthcare clients and business associates. Scott indicates he ultimately selected BlueOrange because "I had trust in BlueOrange's knowledge and understating of the pharmacy and client facility business relationship, and they were one of the very few companies that stay engaged throughout the year to help move the remediation forward. Ultimately we chose BlueOrange because we were looking for a company that would do more than just an annual audit and tell us what we already know."



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► THE INITIAL ASSESSMENT

BlueOrange began their work by conducting a thorough assessment of Remedi Senior Care's existing administrative, technical, physical and organizational controls. A strong emphasis was placed on controls surrounding document management, order processing and prescription delivery methods and practices. An onsite visit was conducted to enhance the data gathering process and validate preliminary findings. The entire assessment process relied on the expert industry knowledge of BlueOrange Compliance staff to identify security deficiencies that might allow unauthorized access or risk.

When asked about the effectiveness of the process, Scott Walker explained that "Blue Orange was quickly able to get a good baseline of our policies and procedures." In addition to a highly efficient process, BlueOrange's technique is also simple and low touch. "BlueOrange did a great job working with our resources and pushing through the obstacles," Scott Walker recalled, "only a minimal amount of time was required from my staff, and I felt very comfortable letting BlueOrange work directly with my team members."

In a matter of weeks, Remedi Senior Care received an easy to read snapshot that identified key areas of importance and set benchmarks for improvement over the next nine months. Scott Walker states, "I have seen several assessment (aka audit) reports in my tenure, this is by far the best format. BlueOrange has found the perfect balance between detailed and thorough with concise and easy to understand."

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► THE ONGOING MANAGED SERVICES EXPERIENCE

Building compliance is not a one-time event, but rather a continual process that requires up to date research, analysis and monitoring. Doing all this without compromising efficiency can be a frustrating challenge.

For most pharmacy providers, receiving ongoing compliance support and post-assessment guidance is critical to long term success. "BlueOrange doesn't just do an assessment and then leave. They are with you through the entire remediation process," Scott Walker explains, "they helped us identify and remediate the low hanging fruit, and most importantly, they are continually providing good clarity and direction for remediation." BlueOrange Compliance simplifies the remediation process and ensures an outcome that is not only HIPAA compliant, but also manageable for the unique aspects and resources of each organization. "All the things my team doesn't have time to do, or doesn't like to do, have been made easier with BlueOrange," contends Scott Walker, "They have great templates, great implementation plans, and require very little time from my staff."

Building compliance is also essential to safeguarding a pharmacy provider's reputation, as well as ensuring competitive advantage. Facility clients are concerned about the safety and security of their residents' information, and want to ensure their pharmacy provider complies with the security rules. Remedi Senior Care applied their corporate philosophy of continuous improvement and customer inspired innovation to building and enhancing security compliance, and in doing so, solidified their reputation as an industry leader. Scott Walker maintains that "in an ever changing electronic healthcare world, our customers take comfort in our commitment to the security of their patient information."

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▶ THE OUTCOME

Healthcare providers are legally and ethically obligated to ensure patient privacy. HIPAA law mandates documentation, processes, and security controls that must be implemented to protect privacy and security of health information. Complex, ever-changing regulations, increased vulnerabilities and lack of policy can make it difficult to stay in front of emerging threats.

When asked what it would have been like to meet these challenges without the support and guidance of BlueOrange, Scott replied, “We never would have made the same amount of progress, because it would have been too easy to fall back into our day to day business demands”. Scott goes on to say “BlueOrange developed simple high level plans to address and remediate our issues. More importantly they organized and brought focus to how we prioritize and organize remediation.”

Perhaps the most significant impact of the partnership has been the support BlueOrange provides to Remedi’s technical team. “IT Departments often struggle with their voice or how they present things like security and vulnerabilities at the senior management level. The BlueOrange report helped translate the content into language that could be digested by all facets of my business,” Scott Walker concludes.

BlueOrange Compliance has been providing privacy and security assessments since the inception of HITECH, and has over 50 years of experience in technology security, compliance and healthcare. Our national client base consists of hospitals, physician provider practices, LTC Pharmacies, SNFs, CCRCs, homecare and hospice and business associates. If you want to learn how BlueOrange Compliance can help you turn HIPAA complexity into HIPAA compliance, call today and speak with one of our security navigation experts.

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