

MAINE MEDICAL CENTER

EMC online support tools and proactive support helps hospital storage team keep pace with exploding data demands



ESSENTIALS

Challenges

- Cope with rapid data growth
- Keep critical data available and accessible 24x7x365
- Protect patient records

Solution

- EMC Customer Support and Services
- EMC Celerra NS unified storage and EMC Symmetrix DMX-4 SAN
- EMC Centera archiving environment

Results

- Live Chat provides fast response and knowledgeable technical support—from quick questions to high-severity level issues
- Proactive services monitor equipment and dispatch service personnel, if needed
- Customer support engineers help advise on updates and upgrades
- Four-hour or less onsite response time helps resolve high-severity problems fast

Maine Medical Center (MMC) serves as a community hospital for the people of greater Portland, Maine, and as the premier tertiary care center for northern New England. The largest non-profit hospital in Maine, MMC is also a teaching and research hospital with an emphasis on applying research to improve patient care. It has been rated one of the top 100 hospitals to work for by *The Nursing Professionals* magazine; one of America's best hospitals by *U.S. News & World Report*; and one of the nation's "Most Wireless Hospitals" by *Hospitals & Health Networks* magazine.

RAPIDLY GROWING DATA

Dennis Ryan, senior storage and backup administrator at MMC, is one of a team of just three people responsible for managing the storage infrastructure for the 660-bed hospital. "It's our responsibility to make sure that data is protected, yet readily available and accessible, not just within the hospital, but by members of MaineHealth as well," says Ryan.

The MaineHealth system is an affiliation of hospitals, medical practices, and health clinics that work together to provide patient care in the state. As the largest member of the group, MMC also provides data processing services for some of the smaller institutions.

"One of the biggest challenges we face is rapid growth in the amount of data," says Ryan. Every night, the team backs up more than 600 servers. Over the past six years, the volume of data has expanded from 52 TB to nearly one PB—or nearly 20 times more.

Among the factors driving data growth at the hospital are new imaging technologies, regulatory data retention requirements, and data duplication for data protection, operational continuity, and disaster recovery.

CRITICAL AVAILABILITY

The storage team took a leadership role in pushing for better solutions to ensure data availability and recovery," says Ryan. "As a hospital, we're operating 24x7x365," he says. "Availability of data is critical to patient care."

The EMC Global Services team designed and implemented a two-site data replication solution that enhances continuity and disaster recovery, as well as protecting critical data. The solution uses identical configurations of EMC® Celerra® NS-480 unified storage and EMC Symmetrix® DMX-3 SAN to a disaster recovery site. Archiving to an EMC Centera® system reduces backups, with archives also replicated to a duplicate Centera frame offsite.

SERIOUS SUPPORT

“When you’re managing patient data, it’s a serious responsibility,” says Ryan. “That’s why it’s been so important to us to have a technical support provider that is knowledgeable and responsive.” Ryan, who focuses primarily on storage while his colleagues manage backup, has been working with EMC for about seven years. “The relationship I’ve developed with the EMC sales and support team is very collaborative,” says Ryan. “They know what our needs are and work with us to meet these needs. It’s a relationship unlike any I’ve had with vendors in the past.”

MMC relies on all of the customer support vehicles EMC provides—from Online Support on EMC Powerlink®, to telephone services, to onsite support from EMC Customer Support engineers. “Every person I’ve dealt with—whether online, over the phone, or onsite—knows their technology and can almost always solve my issue,” says Ryan. When a customer support person doesn’t know an answer, he or she goes and finds it, and when he or she comes back with an answer, it is always correct.”

“I can honestly say I have never worked with a better support organization and I’ve been working with various storage and IT vendors for quite a while.”

DENNIS RYAN,
SENIOR STORAGE AND BACKUP ADMINISTRATOR

QUICK RESPONSE

EMC’s Live Chat service is the service that Ryan uses most frequently. “I click on the Live Chat icon in EMC Powerlink, select the equipment or software, and the support is right there,” says Ryan. “The time it takes to open the chat is remarkable—and every time I have used Chat, the person has been knowledgeable about the subject and ready to help me out.”

“Live Chat is very useful for a quick check when I’m just not 100 percent about something. I jump on and say, ‘This is what I’m going to do, do you have any ideas, any suggestions?’ Nine times out of ten, they’ll tell me something valuable. Sometimes, a higher level engineer joins the chat.”

EMC staffs its Live Chat service with engineers who have the expertise to address high-severity cases, and Ryan says he doesn’t hesitate to use the service for all severity levels. “Even in a situation that ultimately requires an engineer to come onsite, Chat works great. The support engineer will automatically open the support ticket and all the information from the chat is saved to support the ticket and routed for follow-up.”

“I’ve used other vendors’ websites for support,” Ryan adds. “They just don’t give you the same options that EMC does—from KnowledgeBase, to the Support Forums, to Live Chat—to get your problems resolved or to find the answers on your own.”

PROACTIVE AND LOCAL

When onsite support is necessary, MMC has contracted for Premium Support which offers a four-hour onsite response from EMC, and is supplied by a team of local EMC field engineers.

“All of our local engineers know our environment,” says Ryan. “They know the equipment. And they know their job. If they tell me something will be a non-disruptive service, I can trust that they are right. If it might be disruptive, we talk about it before they do anything.”

Ryan also appreciates the many proactive and preemptive aspects of EMC support. For example, the EMC storage at MMC is self-monitoring and will “connect home” using EMC Secure Remote Support (ESRS) if there’s a problem. If there’s an issue, a notification is sent to MMC either by email or phone depending on urgency and MMC preferences. “But often,” says Ryan, “My EMC engineer calls before we know something is wrong. For example, today I got a call from my local EMC support engineer saying that one of the batteries needs to be replaced on one of our EMC DMX™ systems. I hadn’t seen the email notification yet when he told me he had the battery, would be here in about 10 minutes, and he would call me to let me know when he’s done.”

The EMC Customer Support engineers also help keep MMC up to date on new releases or upgrades for their systems. “They help keep me prepared for what’s coming, what I need to do, and so on,” says Ryan.

SUPPORT FOR THE FUTURE

Currently, the storage and backup team is working on a large “one patient, one record” initiative at MMC. With that project, and planning already underway for a data center move and storage technology refresh, Ryan finds the work both challenging and rewarding. “As much as I enjoyed my IT jobs in the manufacturing and banking industries, the hospital is different,” says Ryan. “There’s something about working for a nonprofit, which is caring for the people in our community—including those who can’t afford it. I like being able to contribute to that.”

When it comes to refreshing technology in the data center as part of the upcoming relocation, Ryan says support is his number one consideration. Ryan adds that the quality of support EMC provides every day is exactly what they need to be successful in the future. “EMC has set the bar high. With some companies, whenever I had to place a support call, I’d know from experience that there would be issues. As a result, I’d only place a call with them as the very last resort. With EMC, I have no hesitation about jumping on Live Chat or contacting my local customer support engineer because I know I’ll get the help I need.”

CONTACT US

To learn more about how EMC products, services, and solutions can help solve your business and IT challenges, contact your local sales representative, or visit us at www.EMC.com.

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