



Maine Medical Center in Portland, Maine uses screen savers in lieu of e-mail to convey routine and emergency in-house messages to clinicians.

# Maine Med finds alternative to e-mail

BY JOHN ANDREWS, Contributing Editor

PORTLAND, ME – Take a look at your e-mail inbox and there's a good chance you'll find a lot of unnecessary messages taking up valuable space. Who among us hasn't received "bulletins" like the these:

- A green Chevy sedan in the parking lot has its lights on.
- Leftover doughnuts from this morning's meeting are available in the kitchen.

- A fire drill is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. today

- The system will be taken down for one hour beginning at 2 p.m. to install new upgrades.

While these messages have importance, busy staff members often don't see them during their short window of relevance. And because their shelf lives are very limited, they usually sit on the system long after they've gotten moldy.

Byte by byte, they're slowly eating up precious memory.

That's why Maine Medical Center decided to try an alternative for its 5,000 employees and 2,700 computers: a screensaver messaging system from New York-based Netpresenter. The concept of using screensavers as a forum for immediate-but-temporary announcements made perfect sense for the 600-bed hospital, said Abigail Greenfield, communication

relations manager.

"In any hospital, especially a large hospital like ours, effective internal communication is a constant challenge," she said. "The majority of our staff are physicians, nurses and other clinicians who work various shifts, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We need to reach this audience quickly, efficiently, and easily. E-mail and paper memos are not the most efficient means of communication in a busy clinical setting."

Using the "slide show" format, the Netpresenter system distributes messages that interrupt normal activity with instant pop-up or scrolling messages on the computer screen. The urgency can range from hand-washing reminders to emergencies like a clinical or IT virus, said Netpresenter CEO Frank Hoen.

"This is need-to-know information delivered right now," he said. "And because it's on the screensaver, it doesn't clog up your e-mail inbox." ■

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system hospitals and data centers that will store images for its enterprise-wide PACS system.

Digital radiographic needs for capacity and throughput are large and only going to grow, said John Bosco, vice president and chief technology officer for the system. Datasets from an examination using a 64-slice CT scanner can approach 2 gigabytes, he said.

Moving an entire set of images from one exam can take three to five minutes over its existing network, which uses asynchronous transfer mode technology, Bosco said. That time can be reduced to seconds with the metro Ethernet WAN. "We expect diagnostic images to account for a good 80 percent of bandwidth across the network," he said.

Much of the reason behind that speed involves bringing fiberoptic cables into the facility for the "last mile" of connectivity, instead of copper cable. Rather than laying its own fiberoptic cable, North Shore-Long Island Jewish is using the services of Optimum Lightpath, which builds and manages the fiberoptic network. The network will also carry voice, video and Internet communication, said Kevin Curran, senior vice president for Optimum Lightpath.

For now, such metro Ethernet-based networks are available in only a few metropolitan areas, but that will be changing as new advancements permit expansion.

The Metro Ethernet Forum has set a goal of widening availability of carrier Ethernet services to everyone by 2010. ■

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