state

Managing Patient Satisfaction and Recoveries

University of Florida Health historically managed its Professional Billing (PB) internally while outsourcing its Hospital Billing (HB). The internal department was known for its high patient satisfaction and strong recovery results while the HB outsourcer struggled to meet revenue expectations and incurred a high volume of patient complaints. As UF Health planned for a migration to Epic SBO, with its ability to consolidate guarantors into a single account, the team terminated the outsourced HB contract with the intent of bringing all of the work inhouse.

Even after the successful conversion to Epic SBO with its consolidated guarantor functionality, the internal team struggled to keep up with the account volume due to the back log of HB accounts, many of which had issues from the previous outsourcer. The team needed additional resources and advanced technology tools if they were to manage the accounts effectively inhouse.

Finding a solution forward

The team decided the best solution was to engage an outsourcing provider, with equal priority placed on providing an exceptional patient experience and generating strong recoveries. Given their recent experience, an emphasis was also placed on using technology to achieve both goals as efficiently as possible.

As UF Health researched possible providers through an extensive RFP process, they sought a partner who shared the same cultural values, who would have the same of expectations of their staff in terms of quality and the patient experience. An emphasis on customer service and how the patient should be treated was an absolute must in the new partner. Since PB already enjoyed high patient satisfaction scores, the new partner needed to provide service that was at least as good as what the team was providing internally.

As part of the patient satisfaction goal, UF Health was seeking a partner who treated staff in a manner consistent with UF Health's values. They wanted a partner who valued employee retention, morale and fostering a positive work environment. UF Health recognized that engaged, happy employees lead to higher retention which leads to increased patient account representative experience and knowledge. The longer a representative is on the job, the greater their cumulative knowledge and the more first call resolutions they are likely to achieve. UF Health believed that achieving high patient satisfaction with a high recovery rate is difficult enough without trying to manage high representative turn-over.

About UF Health

University of Florida Health is the Southeast's most comprehensive academic health center and part of one of the nation's Top 10 public research universities, unique for our diverse constellation of health colleges, centers and institutes, and our hospitals, faculty practices and patient care program. With main campuses in Gainesville and Jacksonville and more than 26,000 faculty and staff, UF Health includes six health colleges, nine research institutes and centers, two major teaching hospital systems, dozens of physician medical practices and outpatient services throughout North Central and Northeast Florida, an two veterinary hospitals. UF Health is dedicated to providing high-quality education, research, patient care and public service.

UF Health is headquartered in Gainesville, where the colleges, several hospitals, research institutes and centers are located on UF's main campus. UF Health also operates an academic health center in Jacksonville.

About State

State improves the financial picture for healthcare providers by delivering increased financial results while ensuring a positive patient experience. Rooted in a tradition of ethics, integrity and innovation since 1949, State uses data analytics to drive performance and speech analytics with ongoing training to ensure patient satisfaction. A family-owned company now in its third generation of leadership, State assists healthcare organizations with services spanning the complete revenue cycle including Pre-Service Financial Clearance, Early Out Self-Pay Resolution, Insurance Follow-Up and Bad Debt Collection. To learn more visit: www.statecollectionservice.com.

Outcomes

As part of the implementation process, UF Health was very clear in their expectations and established a baseline to measure recovery results. After a seamless implementation, State has achieved the dual priorities of an exceptional patient experience and strong recoveries. Recoveries have increased 70%, providing additional resources to meet the needs of patients. Equally as important, in the two years of working together, patient satisfaction scores have exceeded UF Health's expectations.
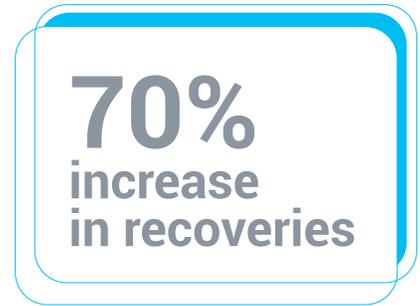
The UF Health team reports that State is a collaborative partner and creates an easy relationship from a vendor management perspective. Recognizing that there will always be issues that occur, the teams are able maintain a positive working relationship towards resolution. State consistently takes ownership and appropriate action to correct an issue or enhance a process. This commitment enables an ongoing partnership that remains focused on patient satisfaction and strong recoveries.

State is able to achieve both goals using a combination of technology, training and developing a culture that promotes a positive, engaged team.

**70%
increase
in recoveries**

Technology Tools to Ensure Productivity and Quality

The commitment to achieving both patient satisfaction and recoveries requires effective use of analytics and technology. State uses speech analytics technology to record and analyze 100% of calls in real time. The real-time analysis enables on-screen and supervisory coaching during the call if needed as well as creating a detailed quality scorecard for every agent, every month. This enables knowledge gaps or quality opportunities to be quickly identified and addressed with individualized training. State uses gamification to keep representatives focused on key goals while making work fun. Representatives can earn online badges for their profile as they level up, can challenge co-workers to duels and exchange points for prizes such as gift cards and electronics. State also uses insurance eligibility screening and advanced data analytics to drive workflow to efficiently use resources to maximize recoveries.

Training

All representatives receive a detailed three week training program upon hire. Training is provided by a dedicated, certified trainer who is an experienced expert in all facets of healthcare receivables management. This training includes HIPAA, FCRA, 501(r) and other appropriate regulatory training in addition to specific training to reflect UF Health's policies as requirements. All representatives received training in empathetic listening skills and the Zappo's School of Wow. Beyond the initial training, each representative receives ongoing training, including over 50 online courses that include video, workbooks, interactive work sessions and assessments to ensure retention. All representatives are expected to obtain HFMA's CRCR and ACA PCS certifications, at State's expense.

Culture

As a family owned business, State's founder Hilding Haag established a culture and value system based on ethical business practices, integrity and hard work. He was known for living by his frequent expression of, "Treat people right." This applies to clients, patients our team members. Today, State continues to live by those principles. There is an expectation of excellence and high performance. State is a goal-oriented company where everyone is held accountable to attain our agreed-upon expectations. Simultaneously, the culture is built on the concept of the three F's – Family, Flexibility and Fun! State has found that engaged, happy team members are best able to provide empathetic care to patients and help them find ways to resolve their account. State's culture has been a key component of its success in assisting UF Health meet both its recovery and patient satisfaction goals.

Lessons Learned

The shift from an internal department to State was characterized by a smooth implementation, followed by performance that exceeded goals. The UF Health team believes this was due to their collaborative and thorough research during the RFP process. The selection team included members of the PB , HB and IT. This diverse group was able to share different perspectives and worked together as a cohesive unit to make a successful choice.

The team also credits on-site visits to the finalists as a key component in their successful selection. The UF Health team found that by visiting the finalists' offices, it allowed a first-hand view of the work environment and atmosphere, which was eye-opening. "My previous experience always required the finalists to present in our facility," said Melanie Dugan, SBO Manager, UF Health. "I found the investment of visiting all of the finalists to be extremely enlightening in that we could see their culture and work atmosphere instead of relying on what they said in a presentation. I would highly recommend other facilities begin to include site visits in their selection process."

Through a partnership with State, UF Health has been able to achieve its dual goals of increased patient satisfaction and increased recoveries.

"Our self-pay cash was an area that was underperforming for a number of reasons. Once we engaged with State to manage and improve this area, we saw an increase of 70% in our total cash recoveries from both our hospital and physician revenue. In addition, we realized an improvement in our overall patient's financial experience"

*Cindy Charyulu, Vice President of Revenue Cycle
UF Health System*