

STREAMLINE TEMPORARY STAFFING TO SAVE TIME AND REDUCE SPEND

ABOUT HOUSTON HEALTHCARE

Serving 300,000 patients annually, Houston Healthcare, located in Warner Robins, GA, comprises seven different entities, including two fully accredited acute care hospitals with a combined capacity of 282 beds. Houston's mission is to improve the healthcare of the communities they serve by providing patient-focused, high-quality, cost-effective services while promoting health and wellness.

THE SITUATION

In a busy hospital serving a large military community, no department can afford to be understaffed so, when a Nurse Manager for Houston Medical Center's Med/Surg floor learns one of the staff nurses needs time off, they immediately pick up the phone to begin the process of hiring a temporary worker. The Nurse Manager notifies the hospital's Workforce Management Analyst who will then reach out to each of the ten staffing agencies Houston works with to provide details about the vacancy.

And then the chaos begins. The calls and emails from agencies start flooding in. The Workforce Management Analyst fields questions from agency recruiters, reviews candidate applications, and passes them along. The Nurse Manager, busy with their primary duties, attempts to schedule calls with the most qualified candidates. If they speak to someone promising, they will let the staffing contact know to move forward with the placement, setting off the time-consuming process of negotiating rates and dates, signing a contract, and then of course, the tedious task of obtaining credentials.

The process is cumbersome, but manageable--at least it would be if the hospital only had the occasional vacancy to fill. However, on any given day, Houston Medical Center and Perry Hospital collectively have an average of 90 temporary nurses and allied staff on site. With each placement requiring 20-30 hours to arrange, they simply couldn't keep up with the demand.

The process itself was inefficient, but the problem had broader implications. The hospitals were at the mercy of their vendors. Contracts were inconsistent, rates were not always competitive, and cancellation policies protected the agencies and contractors--never the hospital.

They knew something had to change, but a previous attempt to streamline the process had been unsuccessful. The team at Houston was rightfully hesitant to seek out another solution.

GOAL

Improve efficiency of the temporary staffing process to save time and reduce spend.

KEY CHALLENGES

1. Inefficient process for sourcing and credentialing temporary nurses and allied staff
2. Managers spending hours fielding calls, emails, and faxes from staffing agencies
3. Subject to agency contracts and paying varying rates
4. Taking weeks to gather credentials for each contractor
5. Reconciling timecards with vendor invoices a time consuming process



"I can't say enough about the HWL team. From our Implementation Specialist to our Account Manager to the Director--I am confident HWL has our best interests in mind."

Minnie Webling, Workforce Management Analyst at Houston Healthcare





HWL IN ACTION IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

ANALYZE

Conduct market rate analysis to set competitive rates

STANDARDIZE

Develop and execute standard contract for use with all vendors

CONTRACT

Invite current 10 plus 43 new staffing agencies to participate

CUSTOMIZE

Configure VMS for Houston's needs and train users

MANAGE

Assign HWL Account Manager to provide day-to-day support

THE SOLUTION

Though Houston wasn't actively seeking a solution, the solution found them. As the MSP for the State of Georgia's COVID Surge Staffing Program, HWL worked closely with the Workforce Management team at Houston. The team was able to see first hand the efficiency, and neutrality, HWL brought to the temporary staffing process. In speaking with the HWL Account Manager about their other staffing challenges, it became apparent that the solution Houston needed was right in front of them.

In August of 2021, HWL partnered with Houston to implement a customized Vendor Neutral MSP technology to deliver a streamlined temporary staffing process. The VMS would give management, and vendors, a single point of contact to communicate vacancies, submit candidates, sign contracts, manage credentialing, and approve time-keeping, and invoices. The MSP implementation was deployed in less than thirty days—normally a three to six month process for agency-led MSP programs.

"The speed and efficiency of implementation was unparalleled to any other," says Lori Kiesel, Vice President of Business Development at HWL. "It was critical that Houston's leadership team focus all of their efforts on caring for patients, and for their own staff, as Omicron was at its height. HWL committed to getting Houston up and running as soon as possible. Our team was on site several times the first few months; working collaboratively with Houston management. We were able to move as quickly as we did, in part, because they were so motivated to start the new process."

"The training was simple, as the VMS is very user friendly," says Minnie Webling, Workforce Management Analyst for Houston. "From the dashboard, I can see at a glance each department's open requisitions, how many submissions each one has, and where they are in the process."

RESULTS

1. Significant Time Savings

Eliminated time wasted on back and forth negotiations, chasing down credentials, and reconciling invoices with ten different vendors

2. Reduce Time-to-Fill and Time-to-Start

Candidates often submitted within a few hours of posting

Offer to onboard in less than one week with credentialing and pre-employment paperwork completed through the VMS

3. Improve Fill Rate

With 56 vendors competing to fill vacancies, each requisition receives an average of 4-7 qualified candidates, resulting in 100% fill rate.

4. Significant Cost Savings

27% reduction in average monthly temporary staffing spend due to more competitive rates, eliminating hidden agency fees, and having travelers complete paperwork prior to the start date.

Webling knew after that first training session that the new system would be beneficial. She would soon discover exactly how much of a game changer HWL would be.

The solution went live in September of 2021 and Houston immediately saw the benefit as they scrambled to fill vacancies created by the Delta variant of COVID-19.

"The new process took so much off of their plates during a time when everyone was especially overloaded," Kiesel says. "Correcting the inefficiencies continues to put more hours back in everyone's day."

The department managers are certainly appreciative of the time saved, but perhaps no one feels it more than Webling. On invoicing alone, Webling used to spend three hours reconciling each invoice from ten different vendors, which accounted for approximately 30 hours. She now spends less than one hour on a single consolidated invoice from HWL.

Similarly, Webling says prior to partnering with HWL, it could take several weeks to chase down missing credentials for individual contractors. Now, that responsibility is on the agency to upload documents to the VMS. From there, an HWL compliance specialist does the heavy lifting of monitoring, and ensuring missing items are provided before the scheduled start date.

HWL reduced costs, and eliminated the daily headaches caused by the former temporary staffing process. The impact though is far greater than saving money, or helping any one person do their job. By significantly decreasing the time it takes to get healthcare providers on the floor, Houston is able to provide even better care for its patients, while easing the burden on current staff, ultimately improving the healthcare delivery process for everyone involved.