

BenefitWerks Case Study

St. Joseph's/Candler Health System Revitalizes Its Benefits Enrollment Process

CHALLENGES

- Annual benefits enrollment process was extremely labor-intensive & paper-based
- Conversion to electronic process seemed overwhelming
- Concerned about quality of user experience and security of online enrollment

SOLUTIONS

- BenefitWerks' online benefits enrollment system
- Seamless integration of enrollment and payroll systems
- Powerful reporting capabilities
- Secure electronic storage of forms, enrollment guides, employee data

RESULTS

- Streamlined & simplified annual benefits enrollment process
- Improved employees' annual enrollment experience
- Cut HR's time spent on annual enrollment by half
- Significantly reduced costs

St. Joseph's/Candler Health System is widely known for its nursing excellence and its devotion to state-of-the-art medical technologies. The technology it relied on for its annual employee benefits enrollment, however, was anything but state-of-the-art. In fact, it was a labor-intensive, paper-based affair that required 10 solid days of its HR staff's precious time each and every year.

If it wasn't for the staff's experience and tireless devotion, the time and labor involved easily could have escalated. After all, there were more than 3,000 employees to enroll in two separate facilities. The coordination required to bring together all of the employees, vendors, paper forms and other necessary resources was considerable, and HR was forced to put a host of other tasks on hold each year until it completed the intensive enrollment process.

Although the St. Joseph's/Candler HR staff always got the job done, they knew there had to be a more efficient way.

"The problem was we were very skeptical of those other ways," said Juan Simmons, Benefits Specialist. "Especially me. I was the biggest skeptic of all. We were used to providing this very hands-on level of assistance to our employees, walking them through the open enrollment process every step of the way. We had a lot of faith in this approach, so we were reluctant to change it. But our benefits broker knew the amount of work we were putting in every year just to get everyone enrolled, so he started talking to us about online systems."

Online enrollment was a far cry from the established process at St. Joseph's/Candler. Each year, the HR staff would set up a room at St. Joseph's Hospital to serve as its base of operations. The room would be fitted-out with eight computer stations and an enormous table holding hundreds of enrollment forms and plan guidebooks. Then, over the next five days, employees would come into the room to meet with the various vendors and discuss the plans they offered ... read through the guidebooks ... fill out their paper enrollment forms ... and eventually make their way to one of the computer stations, where a member of the HR team would be waiting to answer questions and, finally, to enter each

employee's enrollment choices into the hospital's computer system. The entire process would then be repeated at Candler Hospital to enroll its employees.

In 2005, the St. Joseph's/Candler HR team decided it was time to make a change.

Converting a System—and a Skeptic

"That's when our broker introduced us to BenefitWerks," Simmons recalled. "We met with David Carter, who gave us a pretty comprehensive demonstration of the company's online enrollment solution. And I have to admit I was impressed. But I still had my concerns."

Simmons' main concerns were that St. Joseph's/Candler's employees would feel abandoned by being asked to self-enroll or they would be overwhelmed by the complexities of an online system—especially after years of hands-on, one-on-one service from HR. He also was worried that the BenefitWerks enrollment system wouldn't integrate effectively with the organization's payroll system, which could cause an untold number of problems with deductions post-enrollment.

He voiced those concerns candidly to Carter during their initial meeting, even layout out several hypothetical worst-case scenarios to see how the BenefitWerks system would handle them. "In every case, David gave me an immediate and practical response. You could tell that he knew exactly what I was worried about and how the BenefitWerks system would prevent these problems from arising in the first place.

He was very reassuring." So reassuring, in fact, that Simmons and his team decided to implement BenefitWerks' online enrollment solution as quickly as possible.

BenefitWerks began the implementation process by working closely with the St. Joseph's/Candler IT staff, feeding demographic data from the hospitals' system into the BenefitWerks database and then setting up payroll deduction feeds. Next, the BenefitWerks team created a seamless sign-on process, enabling St.

Joseph's/Candler's employees to link directly from their internal network into BenefitWerks without a separate login.

After the new system underwent extensive testing, BenefitWerks completed implementation by training the St. Joseph's/Candler HR staff on use of the system and how to maximize its features and advantages.

Reaping the Benefits of an Online Enrollment Solution

Once the BenefitWerks solution was in place, Simmons and his team saw the results almost immediately.

Most remarkably, the organization's enrollment time was slashed in half. "What used to take us ten days to accomplish took just five days, thanks to the BenefitWerks technology," Simmons noted. "The savings in overtime costs alone were enormous. Plus my staff and I were able to attend to all of the tasks we normally would have had to put on hold during open enrollment, so our overall efficiency level skyrocketed as well."

Part of this time-savings comes from the fact that St. Joseph's/Candler's HR staff no longer has to hand-file all 3,000+ paper enrollment forms in its personnel files. The BenefitWerks technology retains all of the organization's enrollment information securely and electronically—which make retrieving this information throughout

About St. Joseph's/Candler Health System

St. Joseph's/Candler of Savannah, Georgia (www.sjchs.org) is a national Magnet-designated facility for nursing excellence, with a focus on the latest technologies and research. The system handles managed care for some of the biggest employers in the Savannah region, such as the city of Savannah, Colonial Oil and JCB through an exclusive partnership with the Savannah Business Group. St. Joseph's/Candler's comprehensive network includes centers of excellence for oncology, cardiovascular, neurosciences, women's and children's services, orthopedics and a variety of other disease specialties. Comprised of two of the oldest continuously operating hospitals in the United States, St. Joseph's Hospital and Candler Hospital, this not for profit health system is the largest in Southeast Georgia and the region's only faith based institution.

About BenefitWerks

BenefitWerks delivers smart HR software solutions to smart companies throughout the global business community including the United States, Europe, Asia and South, Central and North America. BenefitWerks' HR software solutions help employers, insurance carriers, brokers and other organizations streamline benefits enrollment, reduce administrative costs, and manage and exchange crucial HR data accurately and securely.

the year much easier, according to Simmons. It's an additional savings of time and effort the team hadn't expected.

St. Joseph's/Candler also eliminated a significant portion of its enrollment-related paper costs. "Since BenefitWerks is a Web-based solution, there are no more printed enrollment forms, no more printed guidebooks or SPDs," Simmons said. "BenefitWerks houses all of these items for us electronically, which also makes them easier to change and update every year. We saved thousands of dollars in printing costs alone."

Indeed, the ease with which HR can now share enrollment information with its key medical, dental and vision providers is especially impressive to Simmons and his team, who used to have to fax or mail the information. Data now flows directly from the BenefitWerks system to St. Joseph's/Candler's providers.

And how did the organization's employees cope with the transition to online enrollment? "Turns out I was worried about nothing," Simmons said. Employees found the BenefitWerks system particularly easy to use and even appreciated its 24/7 availability. It meant they were able to enroll when it was most convenient for them. In fact, some employees sat with their spouses to look over options and make their selections together. In the end, employee satisfaction with the new system was excellent.

One of the most significant advantages of the BenefitWerks solution is its powerful reporting capabilities. St. Joseph's/Candler's HR department submits a variety of critical reports throughout the year to senior management and its Finance department. "We have to continually prove the value of our systems and the vendors we partner with," Simmons said. "Plus, we're self-insured so we create highly specialized reports to monitor our own claims, costs and other data. That took an incredible amount of effort in the past but BenefitWerks makes all of our reporting so much easier."

A Focus on Flexibility and Continuous Improvement

While BenefitWerks was a good fit for St. Joseph's/Candler from the beginning, Simmons wanted to make sure the solution could be modified to meet the organization's unique needs and its desire for continuous improvement. "Our philosophy is that there's always room for improvement, so we knew we needed a flexible system—and a flexible partner. And BenefitWerks exceeds our expectations on both counts," said Simmons.

He says that St. Joseph's/Candler's HR staff have asked for several enhancements and system modifications since the two organizations began working together. Every time Simmons and his team ask for something new, BenefitWerks delivers. "Their system is extremely flexible and they've always been able to accommodate us without the slightest hesitation."

The collaboration is working so well, according to Simmons, that he's asked BenefitWerks to take over St. Joseph's/Candler's COBRA administration from another vendor beginning July 1, 2012. In fact, Simmons says that BenefitWerks custom-built a COBRA system for St. Joseph's/Candler, which it has nearly finished testing. The system has performed so well during the trial that Simmons anticipates saving thousands of additional dollars in annual administrative costs once the new system is in place.

"I was once a skeptic," Simmons states. "But not anymore."