

Mount Nittany



CUSTOMER PROFILE
Mount Nittany Health, founded in 1902 and located in State College, Pennsylvania.



HEALTH SYSTEM SPECIALTY:

Primary & acute-care, cardiology, OB/GYN, audiology/diabetes care, reconstructive surgery, occupational health

BEDS: 260

EMPLOYEES: 2,300 including more than 220 physicians

VENDORS: 293 registered

UNIQUE REPS: 772

REP CHECK-INS: 21,588

VOLUNTEERS: Contribute more than 68,000 hours of service annually

Particularly after the football and child sex abuse scandal that first made headlines state- and nation-wide in 2011 and again in fall 2016, the safety and security of people of all ages are always top of mind in the community of State College, Pennsylvania, which is home to Mount Nittany Health as well as Penn State University.

“Criminal and sex offender checks are crucial in our community - we know what can and did happen at Penn State with former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky,” says Paul George, director, Supply Chain, Mount Nittany Health, who immediately recommended a move to a true vendor management system from its manual vendor credentialing and tracking when he arrived three years ago.

KEY CHALLENGES

1. All-manual legacy vendor credentialing system
2. Background and sex offender checks paramount due to local history
3. Inconsistent approach to vendor credentialing and treatment of vendors
4. Fear of audit and accreditation checks
5. Fell short of government requirements
6. Vendor drop-ins and cold calls
7. Impossible to track vendor reps' real-time and historical access
8. Onerous, time-consuming for supply chain staff

SOLUTION

symplr vendor credentialing and verification.

BENEFITS

1. symplr's fully automated, systematic registration, credentialing and compliance
2. Background and sex offender check run annually, others updated monthly
3. All vendors and reps must now meet identical requirements
4. Only registered, credentialed, compliant vendors receive badges and day passes
5. 110% confidence in the face of audit and accreditation checks
6. Meet and exceed government requirements
7. Eliminated drop-ins and cold calls
8. symplr reports ensure traceability and transparency
9. Saves supply chain staff 5 to 8 hours weekly

“The charges and his conviction hit our entire community incredibly hard, and as a result everyone here, from our employees to our vendors, really is aware and understands the potential impact of proper controls and checks.”

It was then no surprise that Mount Nittany's entire community embraced symplr's automated vendor credentialing and George didn't face any resistance or pushback whatsoever. In addition to recognizing the security risks and liability implications, hospital staff also knew that prior to symplr, the organization would have failed an audit had an accrediting body come through the front door.

“Our staff and vendors are completely committed to the new system and it was the easiest rollout and implementation imaginable - symplr's ability to implement its vendor credentialing and onboard every vendor in 30 days gave us a sense of security that we'd lacked,” says George, who suffered through competitors' implementations at other facilities where he worked in the past.

Yet as much as symplr's flawless execution and onsite support during setup and implementation were appreciated by Mount Nittany and its staff three years ago, the real test came this spring when The Joint Commission arrived at the front door to audit the facility. When they were told that Mount Nittany had been utilizing symplr's vendor credentialing service since 2013, the auditors simply smiled, nodded, ran their checks, and left without another word.

“Evidently we passed with flying colors, because they didn't follow up with us - not once,” says George. “When assessing vendors, I sought out those with a long-term presence regionally and nationally - when your vendor credentialing provider is in hundreds of facilities across the U.S. and already has hundreds of thousands of users, their credibility is evident to anyone that works with their systems and support teams.”

Thanks to the symplr team's experience and ability to listen and respond to customers, its system is ready to go out of the box. The fact that symplr already anticipated the needs of customers like George and Mount Nittany saves time, effort, and energy that would be required to start a credentialing program like this from scratch. To this day, symplr takes the initiative year-round to keep George informed and ready for anything that could impact vendors and his staff. For example, every fall, symplr contacts George to remind him that flu season is imminent and it's time to prepare.

"I love that it just happens - I don't have to think about it because symplr does it for me," says George, who notes symplr has recommended everything from new policies and value analysis to specific training, all of which Mount Nittany implemented. "symplr provides an incredibly well thought out package and has the answers I require even before I ask the questions."

At a smaller hospital like Mount Nittany where they don't have the physician's assistants that are so common in larger organizations, vendors in specialties like orthopedic and spinal are inherently valuable to the physicians in the operating room. Fortunately, George can rely on the various symplr dashboards to track these vendors, which is helpful when asked "Who was in with Dr. X during procedure Y?"

Because these vendors live and breathe these specialties every hour of every day, surgeons who might do one hip or knee replacement a month like having an extra set of knowledgeable, experienced eyes alongside. A vendor might use a laser pointer to help direct the surgical team, while another knows what special tool will be required next. Certain vendors have become adept at interpreting a surgeon's request.

"symplr's detailed real-time and historical data allows me to quickly and effectively follow up with the reps when required - it helps ensure accountability and transparency," says George.



On occasion, a basic question, such as ‘where do you want to locate the check-in kiosks?’ inspires conversations that help address other ongoing, but otherwise unrelated issues. For instance, Mount Nittany has grown so much over the past decade, it can take 20 minutes to find a parking spot at 9 a.m. and George didn’t want vendors taking premium parking spots away from patients and other visitors with health and mobility challenges. George took the opportunity to strategically place the vendor check-in station in the area where he wanted Mount Nittany’s vendors to park instead.

“Either vendors park where we want them to park or the further they have to hoof it,” says George. “We were able to think about this because symplr’s questions are designed to guide and lead us in the direction we need to go.”

Before symplr, George and his staff spent 60 to 90 minutes each day preparing lists and badges as well as handling any other vendor issues. Prior to implementing the new system, about half of the vendors pre-booked their visits, the rest showed up unannounced, but either way, the supply chain team needed to interact with them face-to face.

“We rarely see them now, which means we’ve virtually eliminated the busy work and we don’t get the disruptions and intrusions that started and wrapped up each day,” says George. “The energy and time spent getting your focus back on what you’d been doing before a disruption from a vendor was the biggest challenge we had, and symplr addressed it for us.”

George is now in his third year on symplr’s customer advisory board, and has seen the impact that the group’s discussions have on symplr products. Improvements include everything from fine-tuning a particular capability to building a new feature from scratch.

“It’s impressive and rewarding that they implement the bulk of the ideas that result from our brainstorming and sharing,” says George, who also hones his symplr product knowledge as he learns from his peers during these sessions.