



Sleep Clinic Dreams Up Custom App to Archive and Organize Call Recordings

Company profile

Sleep Solutions of New York is a sleep disorders clinic operated by Dr. Richard Hamburg, serving Suffolk County, NY.

Year founded

1986

Industry

Healthcare

Company size

Small

Business need

Customization

Website

sleepsolutionsny.com

Headquarters

Smithtown, New York

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Medical Director

Profile

As Medical Director of Sleep Solutions of New York, Dr. Richard Hamburg is in the business of helping people sleep better. To sleep better himself, as a business owner in what can be a litigious industry, he wants to make sure he has records of important conversations with insurers and with patients.

That desire drove him to combine the voicemail and call recording features of RingCentral with his own custom application for organizing those recordings and archiving them for long-term retention. The RingCentral Platform APIs make it possible for an authorized application to pull the call logs as well as the audio files.

Sleep Solutions specializes in treating disorders such as sleep apnea, a condition in which the patient’s breathing is interrupted during the night. Diagnosis typically requires a sleep study, in which the patient’s breathing and vital signs are observed overnight. For years, the standard treatment has been the use of a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) device, a face or nasal mask connected to a pump that keeps oxygen flowing into the body that the patient wears overnight.

Trained as a dentist as well as a surgeon, Dr. Hamburg invented a CPAP alternative called the NuSleep Oral Appliance, which is manufactured under contract by a dental products firm. Many patients who find wearing a CPAP to be uncomfortable can be fitted for this appliance. Essentially, it ensures the tongue is kept in the right position to avoid blocking the airways. There is also a commercial version, NuSleep OTC, marketed as a way of preventing snoring.

Like any medical practice, Sleep Solutions depends heavily on reimbursement by health insurers for its services. Too often, that is a problem. “We’re always dealing

with insurance companies that just lie,” Dr. Hamburg complains. “They say they will approve it, and then they won’t approve it.” Through the process known as pre-authorization, his staff tries to confirm up front whether a service or procedure will be covered. If the answer is yes, he expects the insurer to honor that commitment.

That is just one of the reasons Sleep Solutions regularly records its calls as well as saves voicemails from insurers or patients. If someone complains of being treated rudely by the office staff, Dr. Hamburg wants to be able to go back and check whether that complaint is accurate. Whenever there is a dispute of any kind, he wants that call recording flagged for future reference.

“You never know which one of those voicemails [or call recordings] you’re going to need,” Dr. Hamburg says. Insurance claims disputes can drag on for six to eight months or more, and litigation can occur up to six years after a patient’s treatment. To protect himself and his business, he wanted a way of preserving the recordings for as long as necessary and organizing them for easy retrieval.

After years of running a computerized phone system off a server in Dr. Hamburg’s office, Sleep Solutions switched to RingCentral in 2013. “I really like RingCentral,” he says, noting that it eliminates a lot of system maintenance cost and hassles associated with the old system—which had been due for an expensive upgrade at the time he switched. The one thing he gave up was long-term storage of voicemails and call recordings, which RingCentral normally retains for 60 days and he wants to keep for seven years.

“It could have been a reason not to switch,” Dr. Hamburg says. After an initial trial, however, “we liked RingCentral so much there was no going back.”



Solution

The RingCentral Platform APIs allowed Sleep Solutions to commission an application that retrieves and stores the recordings and associated call logs, while also making them easier to retrieve when they are needed. By tagging or categorizing the records according to the name of the insurance company or the name of the patient, the Sleep Solutions staff ensures that the record can be located, months or years later, as evidence in a lawsuit or a problem insurance claim.

Without it, when there is a dispute, “You often don’t know who to believe. It may be months and months before you find out there was a mistake, so being able to go back and bring it up was very important.”

By encouraging his staff to take time every day to tag and add notes to the previous day’s call records, Dr. Hamburg is convinced he makes it much more likely that potential problems will be flagged in the system and records of more routine disputes will be easier to find.

The software was developed by Cooperative Computing and designed to allow for the possibility that it could be marketed as cloud application for other medical practices that have the same requirement. First, Dr. Hamburg wants to prove the value of the software for his own practice and refine it as necessary.

The integration was “plain and simple” because of the “the very well-written API” to RingCentral services, according to Hassan Mustafa, team lead for the project. Other technologies used included PHP and the Laravel framework on the server and a user interface based on the Bootstrap HTML, CSS,

and JavaScript framework. Development took about three months or 60 to 65 working days.

Results

“We’re excited about it,” says Dee LaGuardia, the Sleep Solutions office manager. “If any issues with insurance come up, we have to be able to come up with information quickly.” If an insurer gave prior authorization for treatment and later declines to pay, she wants to be able to retrieve that call record. In other cases, the problem might be a clerical error, such as an authorization number being recorded incorrectly, a recording could also be useful for retrieving the correct information, she says.

Without the custom application, she would sometimes look up and retrieve call records directly from the RingCentral administrative dashboard. However, her search options there were limited to the phone number and time of the call. But if she is trying to retrieve a record of an interaction with a particular patient, that patient may have called from several different phone numbers, and insurance company call centers also use multiple numbers. So tagging the call records with the name of the party company and type of interaction will make a huge difference in her ability to find them when they are really needed, she says. For example, she can search by patient’s name and a tag like “complaint” or by the name of an insurer and “prior authorization.”

Saving clerical time is just the beginning of the payoff, LaGuardia says. “It gives us peace of mind because we know we have it in there. If they tell us, ‘we never said that,’ we can prove yes you did.”