

CHRISTUS Health improves contract management



CHRISTUS Health, ranked among the top ten Catholic health systems in the U.S., is comprised of almost 350 services and facilities. CHRISTUS Health uses e.essential™ Contract Guardian, a contract management solution from LANSA business partner Rippe & Kingston. Built with LANSA, the browser-based solution can be deployed across multiple platforms in-house, or on a SaaS basis. CHRISTUS Health has implemented the solution in a Windows environment at its Houston data center.

Diana M. Holland, Program Manager, Strategy and Innovation, Business/Financial Strategies with CHRISTUS Health's Information Management team, said "With Contract Guardian, the entire contract management process is more transparent, which allows us to build our operations on a process, rather than being dependent on individual people."

Aiming for Unity

CHRISTUS Health is a Catholic, faith-based, not-for-profit health system comprised of almost 350 services and facilities, including 50 hospitals and long-term care facilities, 175 clinics and outpatient centers and dozens of other health ministries.

In 2004, CHRISTUS Health launched an initiative, called the Unity Project, to standardize clinical, business and financial processes across its facilities. As a first and major step, CHRISTUS Health hospitals moved, or are moving to, a single Healthcare Information System (HIS), namely, MEDITECH.

Holland explains, "Converting to a corporate wide HIS marked the beginning of our ability to establish standardized clinical and financial policies and procedures throughout all our

facilities. Concurrently, we are looking at standardizing other applications. Moving to a corporate wide contract management system is a priority, because it allows regions and facilities to collaborate and share information. It provides for a proactive approach to contract management and informed business decisions."

With that in mind, **James Lofton**, Process Analyst, Contracts/Insurance Administrative Services for CHRISTUS Health's Northern Louisiana region, set out in 2007 to identify a contract management solution.

Lofton explains, "Hospitals generally have between 800 to 1,600 contracts. The contracts are with physicians, suppliers and also include real estate dealings, insurance policies and any other agreements that need record keeping."

"I was looking for a more flexible solution to manage the growing volume and variety of contracts. The solution also needed to offer journaling of all activities around a contract. Rippe & Kingston's e.essential™ Contract Guardian solution stood out for its flexibility and ease-of-use. Most importantly, their solution was one of the few, if not the only, that offered journaling."

"Contract Guardian enables us to instantly locate contracts."

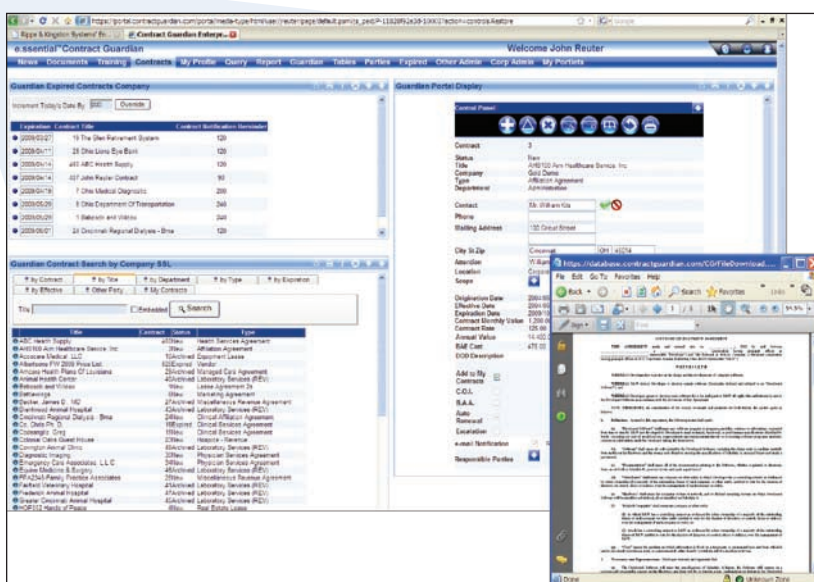
With training and implementation assistance from Rippe, Lofton implemented Contract Guardian successfully in the Northern Louisiana hospitals. During that initial pilot period, the solution was deployed in a SaaS environment hosted by Rippe. After a successful trial, the solution was rolled out to additional regions and deployed in-house on a Windows server at CHRISTUS Health's Houston data center.

Contract Guardian

At CHRISTUS Health, a contract will for example, begin with a corporate supply chain manager negotiating the best possible agreement. All documents, images, email messages and meeting notes that are related to the agreement can be journaled in Contract Guardian and attached to the agreement.

Once the agreement is in place, the contract is assigned to the local contract managers at the hospitals in the regions it applies to. Local contract managers then assign the agreement to the relevant staff in their hospital. For example, if the agreement is with a supplier of syringes, all individuals who might purchase syringes are made aware of the contract.

"Contract Guardian enables us to instantly locate contracts through several search interfaces. It also includes a feature called My Contracts that allows you to bookmark contracts that require your focus. So, you don't even have to search. Plus it gives you the ability to create a to-do list using a calendar feature. The combination of the automatic bookmark feature within the contract and the fact it is a searchable PDF delivers dramatic time savings," Lofton explains. →



Contract Guardian enables users to instantly locate contracts through several search interfaces and view an image of the original contract document.

"Another feature that comes in particularly handy is that managers can reassign contracts temporarily to someone else. That way, nothing falls through the cracks when someone is on holiday or sick leave."

The solution also allows for an internal news area, which Lofton uses to post information about new features and out-of-office notifications.

From an IT point of View

Contract Guardian is written in LANSAs and delivered to the user's desktop via a browser-based portal. The solution supports multiple platforms (Windows, System i, UNIX and Linux) and multiple databases running on those platforms.

Thom Davidson, senior partner at Rippe & Kingston, explains that at the design stage of Contract Guardian, in addition to business requirements, there were numerous technical requirements that had to be met. Such as: accessible from any location, fully secured, automated auditing capabilities, intuitive and consistent user interface, easy to deploy, platform- and database-independent and the ability to integrate with Microsoft Office and other applications.

"Rapid development and the ability to rapidly respond to any request with the confidence we could deliver, was also important. Those requirements made our decision relatively easy on what would do the job: Portal Technology combined with LANSAs."

"The LANSAs Web Application Modules (WAMs) are perfect for generating portlets. Platform and database independence are part and parcel of LANSAs and LANSAs's wizards assured us of development speed and consistency," concludes Davidson.

Security and Accountability

"Contract Guardian's advanced search and bookmark facilities, together with journaling and other sophisticated features, help us minimize the risk of non-compliance and eliminate reliance on paper. We don't have to worry anymore about contracts being misfiled and we don't have to email or copy them," says Lofton.

Lofton finds that the journaling feature gives life to the contract, which is especially useful in situations where someone takes over an existing contract.



CHRISTUS Health is committed to delivering high quality, compassionate healthcare throughout its 350 medical facilities in the United States and Mexico.

"Platform and database independence are part and parcel of LANSAs."

"Journals also give security because they cannot be deleted or altered after the fact," says Lofton. "If questions or disputes arise; I can go back to the journal. Contract Guardian provides accountability with its journaling, and enforces the correct procedures."

Holland comments, "Contract Guardian's ability to stop agreements from automatic renewal, provides for a potentially huge saving. The system gives prior warning about agreements that are about to expire. That gives us time to research, look around for alternatives and negotiate a better deal."

"Enterprise wide deployment will give us an insight into what contracts exist. We may find out, for example, that multiple regions have their own contract at different levels with the same vendor. In that case, it would be time to talk with that vendor and negotiate better pricing – maybe covering more regions. It also allows us to properly redistribute some costs, such as annual maintenance and support. It is contract management without walls."

"Having the most current contracts in place and the information available and

transparent do allow for improved purchasing decisions and strategic planning. It avoids ending up with disparate prices and allows for standardized product purchasing and use."

Transparent Contract Management

To date, CHRISTUS Health has six regions signed up with a few more to follow. The corporate Legal and Risk Management department is close to utilizing the solution as well, with the main focus to go across all the facilities and determine what contracts are in place.

Holland explains, "Deployment is simple and only requires placing an icon on the users' desktops. Nothing else needs to be installed or maintained on the part of the client."

User training is equally simple. The solution comes with several recorded Webinars that visually demonstrate how to use the application. "Support and training have been wonderful, which is important, because you're not only buying a product, you also gain the ability to partner with the company."

Holland concludes that now formal procedures are in place, it helps staff with their purchase decisions. "With Contract Guardian, the entire process is more transparent, which allows us to build our operations on a process, without depending on individual people." ■

COMPANY AND SYSTEM INFORMATION

- Headquartered in Dallas, CHRISTUS Health is an international Catholic, faith-based, not-for-profit health system comprised of 350 facilities in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Georgia, Utah and Mexico. The system employs more than 28,000 Associates. CHRISTUS Health is listed among the top ten Catholic health systems in the U.S. For more information visit: www.christushealth.org
- Rippe & Kingston, a LANSAs partner based in Cincinnati, Ohio, is an Information Technology firm that provides software solutions and services to clients around the world. Rippe & Kingston also has established partnerships with IBM, Microsoft and Avnet. For more information visit: www.rippe.com and www.contractguardian.com