Cloud Communications for Healthcare Providers

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Today, everyone in the healthcare industry faces many communications-related challenges—especially clinics, hospitals and insurance providers that transmit protected health information (PHI). With sensitive information being passed back and forth with such frequency, it is critical for healthcare providers and their business associates to select a communications company that provides safe data transmission and storage. High-profile breaches of patient health information are forcing security and compliance issues to the top of boardroom agendas.

While industry executives scramble to respond, the federal government is stepping up enforcement and increasing penalties and fines. To complicate matters, all of this is occurring at a time when healthcare providers are under intense pressure to cut costs.

Efforts to streamline expenses and improve workplace efficiency are driving healthcare providers toward new technologies. Of course, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance is a primary concern whenever PHI is transmitted or stored. 8x8 offers HIPAA-compliant business communications solutions that lower expenses, expand communication and collaboration capabilities and keep sensitive interactions and data safe and secure.

Are You **Exposed?**

Cyber attacks on enterprises are front-page news. According to the Cost of Cyber Crime Study by the Ponemon Institute[1]:

> *With cyber attacks on the rise, successful breaches per company each year have risen more than 27 percent, from an average of 102 to 130. Ransomware attacks alone have doubled in frequency, from 13% to 27%, with incidents like WannaCry and Petya affecting thousands of targets and disrupting public services and large corporations across the world. One of the most significant data breaches in recent years has been the successful theft of 143 million customer records from Equifax—a consumer credit reporting agency—a cyber crime with devastating consequences due to the type of personally identifiable information stolen and knock-on effect on the credit markets. Information theft of this type remains the most expensive consequence of a cyber crime. Among the organizations we studied, information loss represents the largest cost component with a rise from 35% in 2015 to 43% in 2017. It is this threat landscape that demands organizations re-examine their investment priorities to keep pace with these more sophisticated and highly motivated attacks.”*

What steps are you taking to protect your patients' personal information? Could your organization handle a sophisticated attack? Are all points of data storage secure, including your communications system?

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Improving Healthcare Communications **with 8x8**

The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) projects that healthcare spending will, on average, rise 5.5 percent annually from 2017 to 2026 and will comprise 19.7 percent of the U.S. economy in 2026, up from 17.9 percent in 2016. By 2026, health spending is projected to reach $5.7 trillion.

What this means for you is stronger competition and an ever more pressing need to evolve and embrace new technologies.

Government regulation, limited Medicare funding and low payment rates force healthcare providers to seek cost-cutting measures in order to survive.

One way that healthcare providers can control costs is to move their communications systems to the cloud. This takes away the burden and expense of managing on-premises equipment, and makes upgrading to the latest technology automatic. 8x8 offers integrated voice, meetings, team messaging and contact center capabilities on a single platform to create one system of engagement. This approach increases staff efficiency, eliminates the need to manage on-site systems and enhances both the provider and the patient experience. 8x8's solutions are secure and compliant, to meet the needs of today's healthcare providers.

Communications. Transformed.

8x8 integrates voice, meetings, team messaging and contact center capabilities into a secure and compliant system of engagement.
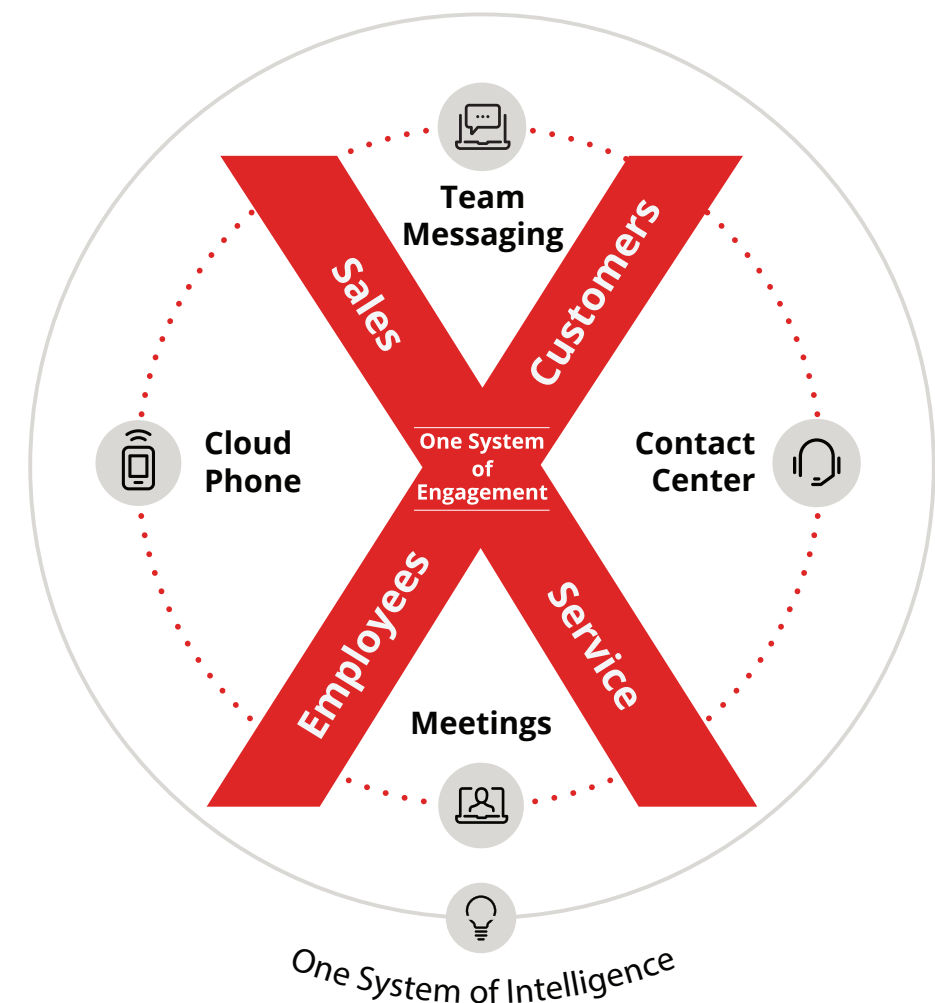
The High Costs of **Non-Compliance**

In recent years, government enforcement of data protection and privacy laws intended to protect personal health information has increased. In order to comply with HIPAA regulations, a healthcare provider must now execute a business associate agreement (BAA) with any vendor or service that has access to PHI—including everything from MRI and other imaging machines that store patient results to communications systems that store voicemail and chat messages. This means you are responsible for ensuring the compliance of all vendors handling PHI on your behalf.[3]

Failure to protect data can expose companies to serious legal risk, and not just from the federal government. District attorneys can and do take action at the state level as well. In one case, a medical billing company that lost unencrypted data (data that was never exploited) settled with Health and Human Services for HIPAA/HITECH violations for $2.5 million. This is small change compared to what followed. The company was prohibited by the state from doing business for a minimum of two years and a maximum of six, and paid out $14 million in a class action suit brought by shareholders. The estimated total cost was between $2,000 and $6,000 per record. The CEO and CFO were both replaced.[4]

Your best defense against HIPAA breaches is to work with recognized third-party-validated HIPAA compliant providers. In addition, you should insist on tailored Business Associate Agreements from companies that are experienced in providing HIPAA-compliant solutions.

Safer Communications.
Stronger Collaboration.

Many companies are wary of moving away from on-premise systems to the cloud because they equate proximity with safety and control. In fact, most IT groups are responsible for a complex environment filled with a variety of non-conforming legacy systems, applications and servers. Transitioning to the cloud can bring your communications system into a secure, homogenous environment where anomalies are easier to see and risks are easier to identify. 8x8 data centers are:

- Externally certified to meet SSAE 16 standards, or similar international standards
- Ranked in the top 20% of Cloud Services by Enterprise-Ready Cloud Trust™ Ratings
- Encrypted as appropriate with state-of-the-art data protection
- Safeguarded through continuous monitoring and surveillance
- Protected by secure authentication

We are the only provider of cloud-based unified communications and contact center solutions that advertises third-party-verified HIPAA-compliant solutions and also offers tailored BAAs to companies of all sizes—without requiring excessive contractual obligations. Evidence of 8x8's commitment to compliance includes the following:

- Every service has been engineered to be HIPAA-compliant
- We can provide customers with a tailored Business Associate Agreement (BAA)
- Our in-house compliance office is headed by **Michael McAlpen**, a recognized healthcare compliance and security expert
- 8x8 consultants are trained in HIPAA compliance

8x8 is at the vanguard in providing cost-effective, cloud-based communications solutions specifically for the healthcare ecosystem, without sacrificing robust communications capabilities. Our extensive suite provides the following benefits:

- Increases employee productivity, while typically reducing costs by 30 to 40 percent through IP telephony calling and management (VOIP)
- Enables providers and patients to connect in multiple ways through integrated, unified messaging, email, video, fax and voice messaging
- Allows professionals and staff to know who is available at any time with presence technology

- Enhances collaboration among staff and patients with sophisticated meeting technology
- Improves patient and employee experiences with comprehensive contact center capabilities
- Protects sensitive conversations with secure instant messaging

8x8 communications solutions enable more efficient consultations and stronger collaboration, both within your business and between providers and patients or customers. That means enriched experiences, increased productivity, lower costs and reduced concerns about compromised PHI security.

Peace of **Mind**

So you can focus on what's really important

Healthcare providers are being buffeted by a variety of forces, including increasingly sophisticated attacks on data security, stepped-up enforcement of compliance rules, and the desire to improve patient-physician interactions, while balancing the need to reduce costs and the administrative overhead of electronic health records. That's more than enough to keep care providers busy—and there was nothing on that list about actually providing healthcare. Transitioning to a cloud solution for communications is an easy way to lower costs while improving the care provider and patient experience.

8x8 is the only cloud communications provider to advertise third-party verified HIPAA-compliant solutions and offer tailored BAAs to companies of all sizes—without requiring excessive contractual obligations.

8x8 is uniquely capable of providing third-party-verified compliance with HIPAA, PCI-DSS 3.1, FISMA/FIPS 140-2 and Safe Harbor regulations. If you are concerned about compatibility, we provide you with broadly integrated, secure and compliant cloud-based technology that works seamlessly with all popular devices. 8x8 was the first cloud communications provider to offer an SLA guaranteeing both call quality and 99.99% uptime on a wide variety of broadband networks for peace of mind as well.

Integrated voice, meetings, team messaging and contact center with leading security and compliance.

Communications. Transformed.

1. Ponemon Institute 2017 COST OF CYBER CRIME STUDY
2. Reuters U.S. healthcare spending to climb 5.3 percent in 2018
3. US Department of Health & Human Services, HITECH Act, Final Rule, March, 2013.
4. US Department of Health & Human Services, 'Stolen Laptops Lead to Important HIPAA Settlements.

Ready to take the next step?

Contact a Solutions Expert to learn why 8x8 is the only complete communications platform that uses the collective power of your business to improve the customer experience across all interaction channels. Call us at 1-866-879-8647, or visit 8x8.com.

LEARN MORE

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8x8, Inc. (NYSE:EGHT) is a leading provider of cloud phone, meeting, collaboration and contact center solutions with over a million business users worldwide. 8x8 helps enterprises engage at the speed of employee and customer expectations by putting the collective intelligence of the organization in the hands of every employee. For additional information, visit www.8x8.com, or follow 8x8 on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.

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