

TalkRx: Keeping Independent Pharmacies Competitive

SUMMARY

Customer:
VOW, Inc.

Partner:
888VoIP

Solution:
TalkRx

Featured Sangoma Product(s):
A200, A400, A10x

“It’s obvious that Sangoma has deep engineering roots, the quality of the products is unmatched – and they just work!”

*Chip Simmons
President and CEO, VOW, Inc.*



THE CUSTOMER

Most small independent retailers must find cost-effective ways to maintain a competitive footing against “big box” or larger competitors in order to attract and retain customers and in some cases to survive altogether. This is particularly evident in the case of independent community pharmacies. These independent retailers represent a significant portion of the United States’ health care delivery system, filling over 1.5 billion prescription per year. That’s more than 200 prescriptions per day per pharmacy[†].

THE CHALLENGE

Competitive pressure from large chains and mail-order pharmaceutical houses continue to drive independent community pharmacies to find new ways to effectively compete and differentiate themselves from these large and well-funded entities. A significant challenge lies in the implementation of a customer service environment that places them on par with the large chains, meets customer expectations, and doesn’t break the bank.

As with any retail business, responsiveness to customer needs and expectations can spell the difference between success and failure for a pharmacy. In today’s always-connected and on-the-go world, consumers expect to be able to request refills over the phone any time of day or night. They also want automated refill reminders and the ability to access important personal information directly, including the number of available refills, prescription number, and other details maintained within the pharmacy management system – all without waiting on hold for a pharmacy employee.

The integrated communications and record-keeping needs within a retail pharmacy go well beyond requesting and processing refills. The pharmacy must accept and record phoned prescription orders from physicians, accept faxed prescription orders, and maintain archived records to validate every prescription dispensed. The automation of even a portion of this activity can relieve significant time demands on pharmacy personnel and help to increase the time available to consult with patients.

For the nationwide chain pharmacy, these challenges are delegated to the corporate IT group to implement and maintain. And, because the expense is

spread across a relatively large footprint of locations, there is an opportunity to take advantage of economies of scale. These economies and resources, such as an IT group – or in most cases even an IT person, are not available to the independent pharmacy operator.

Pharmacists and staff perform highly critical tasks every day that have a direct impact on the health and welfare of their customers. Most do not understand the internal workings of the pharmacy management software, the computer network technology, or the telephone system that connects them to the outside world – nor should they.

While the cost of a customer interaction solution is very important to the independent pharmacy retailer, it is even more critical that solutions in this environment provide reliable, intuitive and simple operation so that the technology doesn't distract from core business efficiency or productivity.

THE SOLUTION

“We rely on the Sangoma telephony boards integrated into TalkRx to provide an unmatched level of reliability that helps ensure system stability, as well as delivering extremely clear voice quality to the users.”

*Chip Simmons
President and CEO, VOW, Inc.*

For many independent retail pharmacies across the United States, maintaining a competitive footing with large chains and mail-order pharmaceutical houses has been delivered in the form of TalkRx, an integrated telephony and pharmacy management platform developed and manufactured by Vow Corporation.

TalkRx is a server-based platform that is installed at the pharmacy site to provide IVR and VoIP service. In some cases, a single server supports multiple retail stores and enables load sharing between sites to help ensure customers are served efficiently. This innovative product allows pharmacies to stand toe-to-toe with national chains in meeting customer expectations and demands, and also provides a number of powerful features that serve the operational needs of the pharmacy itself. And it does it without the need for on-site technical expertise.

“Our customers are not IT or telecom specialists. They need a solution that works right out of the box and provides the level of convenience, reliability and quality experience that most consumers have come to expect from a retail pharmacy,” noted Vow’s president and chief executive officer, Chip Simmons. “We rely on the Sangoma telephony boards integrated into TalkRx to provide an unmatched level of reliability that helps ensure system stability, as well as delivering extremely clear voice quality to the users.”

Installed throughout the nation, Vow’s TalkRx provides a highly reliable IVR system that integrates with most pharmacy management platforms. Key capabilities include:

- Rapid refill IVR
- Voice mail archival with refill and prescription orders

- Specialized alerting features to identify incoming calls from doctors
- Caller-ID based routing of inbound calls
- Easily customized greetings and IVR prompts
- Flexible out-dial features to provide automated refill-ready messages or other outbound messaging to customers



A200 Analog Telephony Board

In addition, innovative features such as automated call routing based on caller ID enables premium customers, doctor's offices, and others deserving special services to bypass the standard IVR interface and connect directly to the appropriate destination, which simultaneously enhances service while reducing time demands on pharmacy staffers. Advanced capabilities including integrated call recording and voice mail archiving provide a means to fortify prescription information backup to supplement the traditional practice of maintaining hard-copy records. And, integration of incoming faxes into the archival system further streamlines record keeping for the pharmacy.



A400 Analog Telephony Boards (Stacked)

The highly successful TalkRx product can be configured with Sangoma's A200 or A400 analog interface boards or the A10x series of digital interface boards supporting up to 4 T1 or PRI spans per system. Vow made the decision to incorporate the Sangoma boards into TalkRx due to the Sangoma's unmatched reputation for quality engineering and reliable hardware, and the fact that the full range of different interface boards could be deployed with the exact same application software.



A101 Digital Telephony Board

"In order to design a flexible system that could be easily deployed at any size pharmacy or group of pharmacies, we required telephony interface boards that could integrate with our solution, ranging from a single FX line to multiple digital spans with selectable support for T1 and PRI," continued Simmons. "We turned to 888VoIP, our long-time supplier of hardware solutions, to source a solution that provided the level of reliability and flexibility we needed in our product. 888VoIP recommended the Sangoma family of analog and digital interface boards. Once we got them in the development lab, we were impressed with the obvious high quality of each board, and the ease with which we were able to integrate them into TalkRx."

The hardware-based echo cancellation designed into the Sangoma boards was also a key differentiator in selection process. And the lifetime warranty on Sangoma boards delivered an unmatched level of confidence that the products would work as intended without costly maintenance and service calls.

"We conducted a lot of research, and at every turn we were told that Sangoma was the best, and our experience has borne that out," noted Simmons. "We've only had reason to contact Sangoma support a few times, but when we needed it, the response was great. Sangoma is the most responsive vendor we work with."

"The pharmacy staff needs to pay attention to safely and effectively serving customers, not figuring out how the phone system works, or worse yet, what

might be wrong with the phone system if there is a problem,” concluded Simmons. “TalkRx is designed at every level to be reliable and easy to use. The Sangoma boards not only provide flexible telephony interface choices to match customer needs, the reliability of the hardware helps ensure that TalkRx runs fine for a long time.”

THE PARTNER

Based outside of Spartanburg, South Carolina, Vow Corporation creates specialized Integrated Voice Response (IVR) and Voice over IP (VoIP) solutions specifically for the retail pharmacy industry. Vow’s keen focus on the competitive needs of its pharmacy customers has enabled it to be very successful in delivering trouble-free solutions that rely on telephony boards from Sangoma. As an innovator in the space, Vow is determined to supply a high-quality and highly-reliable product at a price that meets the needs of these retailers.



Vow Corporation sources all their Sangoma Hardware from 888VoIP, headquartered East Aurora, New York. 888VoIP is a nationwide distributor of IP telephony hardware and systems. “One of our fundamental goals as a supplier of VoIP technology is to not only provide our customers with quality components, but to support their product development efforts with top-notch training, service, and consultation throughout the span of our relationship,” said Todd Milbrand, business development manager for 888VoIP. “We strive to be a trusted partner that contributes to our customers’ successes through responsiveness and application of technological expertise. From the onset of our distribution relationship with Sangoma, we were convinced that Sangoma shared our commitment to delivering quality products with top-notch service and support. We are very proud to have great companies like Vow Corporation rely on us to provide the products and support they need to deliver a quality solution to their customers.”

<http://888voipstore.com>

† <http://www.ncpanet.org/index.php/independent-pharmacy-today>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Sangoma is a leading provider of hardware and software components that enable or enhance IP Communications Systems for both telecom and datacom applications. Sangoma’s data boards, voice boards, gateways and connectivity software are used in leading PBX, IVR, contact center and data-communication applications worldwide. The product line includes both hardware and software components that offer a comprehensive toolset for deploying cost-effective, powerful, and flexible communication solutions.

With certifications and distribution partnerships around the world – Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia and both North and South America – Sangoma continues to bring innovation, scalability and higher density solutions to the global telecom market. In addition, Sangoma is recognized as a leader in product quality, with many of its board products being covered by a lifetime warranty.

Founded in 1984, Sangoma Technologies Corporation is publicly traded on the TSX Venture Exchange (TSX VENTURE: STC).

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