

# Turf Protection, Commoditization and Interoperability

One solution for both challenges

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Over the past few years, radiologists and other medical imaging professionals have been hearing about the growing commoditization of radiology and its potential threats.

Commoditization reflects the perception of radiologists as having limited scope and function and thus, providing a professional service that can be performed by the lowest bidder. Commoditization brings with it reduced loyalty in the market, that is, reduced turf protection.

At this time, the American College of Radiology is engaged in a re-education of "patients, referring physicians and other key stakeholders" to help them understand that a radiologist's function and responsibility goes far beyond the interpretation of images.

As the commoditization concern grows, some medical imaging enterprises that have outsourced certain reads are returning to their roots by bringing all interpretations back in-house.

Dr. Andrew Levine is a radiologist and chairman of the executive committee at Medical Imaging Northwest (MINW), based in Tacoma, Wash. Dr. Levine was a member of the group that re-examined MINW's outsourcing policy.

Among other things, MINW found that the cost of outsourced night reads was rising.

So what at first was seen as a way to reduce costs while providing quality service was then reviewed to determine whether, for example, an in-house system could be developed that would reduce costs and provide other benefits.

"We were using night services from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. but it got to the point of being fairly expensive as ERs got busier and busier," said Dr. Levine. "This past August we moved to bring outsourced reads in-house and be performed from one of our imaging centers in-house at night. There are three radiologists who share the duties on a rotating basis."

The system that enables MINW to provide night reads at a lower cost is MEDxConnect from Compressus. MEDxConnect gave MINW the communications solution it needed to seamlessly move images and data anywhere, regardless of the number of vendor sources.

"With MEDxConnect, we will be able to read from our offices using one worklist and one existing workstation," said Dr. Levine. "With MEDxConnect, we will have one look, one feel, regardless of what location it is coming from.. It is a major improvement in service that has allowed us to explore opportunities outside of our 'neighborhood' such as clinic work."

Beyond cost savings and the chance to generate additional revenue, MEDxConnect has provided certain intangible benefits that are paying huge dividends even after such a short period of time.

"From a customer service standpoint and cost, it makes more sense," said Dr. Levine. "Because our people are reading everything, we are walking into less work in the morning. There is no doubt that this is a customer service improvement because it allows more availability to our radiologists. We have had nothing but positive comments since we brought back the night service."

Turf protection, the ability to limit encroachment by competitors, is another benefit. As the increased customer satisfaction and loyalty continue to rise, the image of the radiologist as a commodity should fall.

## About MEDxConnect

MEDxConnect offers a holistic solution to connecting disparate systems. Designed to manage the workflow of an imaging health care enterprise, the MEDxConnect system provides a suite of offerings that has the power to connect systems from multiple vendors, that offers proven interoperability, and that allows an organization with disparate multivendor systems to function as one virtual enterprise.

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