

CASE STUDY

National Health Service (NHS)

Healthcare's mobile future will not be programmed



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



The Pharmacy On-Call System (POCS) lets pharmacists respond to requests for medication by looking up – from their smartphones – the details and characteristics of any of the 86,000 available drugs and instantly provide advice about suitability, availability and, if necessary, substitutions. The Webalo-enabled connection to the pharmaceutical database was completed in less than a day.

To meet the information and decision-support needs of medical staff, clinicians, and administrators, University Hospitals Birmingham is standardizing on Webalo to provide – in minutes – smartphone access to vital enterprise content and functions.

Inside the one-million employee National Health Service (NHS), University Hospitals Birmingham has a reputation for innovation – for trying new technologies that have the potential to turn long-term strategies into short-term solutions. Yet there didn't seem to be a magic bullet that would let UHB enhance its investment in BlackBerry smartphones by enabling them to access the transactional, bi-directional enterprise applications that run the business.

“We would need another set of skills and competency, and that seemed onerous,” UHB's Director of IT Stephen Chilton concluded. “It would have been economically prohibitive.” As a result, Chilton continued looking for the “golden nugget” that would provide a cost-effective way to extend the enterprise to users' smartphones.

That enterprise includes a mix of packaged and, more predominantly, in-house applications that offer rich reporting, executive dashboards with key performance indicators, and the transactional, bi-directional programs that provide health and operational data and permit the exchange of information among doctors, consultants, pharmacists, nurses, and other practitioners who have a direct effect on patient care.

In an environment as dynamic as a major regional hospital – UHB is the center of one of 120 separate “trusts” within NHS – where information is constantly changing and staff members are constantly in motion, smartphone access could offer enormous advantages. If enterprise content could be accessed on a BlackBerry, instead of a desktop or laptop computer, information could be shared more quickly, decisions could be made without delays, and patient care could be enhanced.

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NORSE, UHB's Neurological On-Call Referral System, lets doctors obtain real-time assistance from specialists at UHB, which is recognized as a center of excellence within the NHS. Once assistance is requested, Webalo connects the consulting physician to the details of the case, updates the records with the notes and advice provided by the consultant, and makes it all part of the patient's permanent medical history. The system has greatly accelerated the speed of diagnosis and treatment via the surgeons' BlackBerrys and was only made possible using Webalo's Mobile Platform.

“Webalo can prove itself straight away without waiting months to see results.”

Stephen Chilton, UHB
Director of IT

The wireless and IT infrastructure was already in place – UHB recently completed a state-of-the-art hospital with integrated WiFi to support its 6,900 doctors, medical staff members, administrative and operational employees, and 340 consultants in a facility with 1,213 beds that treats more than 50,000 patients a year – so all that was needed was an affordable technology solution that did not require specialized skills... and a way to overcome an aversion to any risk that might affect the ability to deliver quality care.

When Stephen Chilton learned about Webalo, one thing was immediately clear. “Webalo can prove itself straight away without waiting months to see results,” he realized. “We couldn't have done that before” using software development toolkits. In a matter of hours, his team had created smartphone connections to a neurological referral application for the clinical staff, to a business intelligence dashboard that keeps administrators apprised of organizational performance, and to a pharmacy on-call referral application.

Subsequently, UHB connected a broad range of enterprise resources – just as quickly – to users' smartphones.

- Administrators can now review their departments' key performance indicators and receive alerts when situations need attention.
- Medical care, at night and after hours, has been enhanced through the delivery of a system that links multi-professional teams that have the full range of skills and competencies necessary to meet the immediate needs of patients.
- There are now plans for cardiology, oncology, radiology, pharmacology, and other specialists to have their own mobile referral capabilities.

Webalo has enabled mobile access for hundreds of mobile users, and many more are expected to benefit from enterprise-to-mobile connectivity as usage expands.

Speed and simplicity were obvious benefits on the IT side, but they carried over. “Doctors want things as simple as possible,” Chilton stated, “and IT goes out of its way to engineer that into apps, which is mirrored in Webalo connections.” That's because Webalo connects to what's already there and can configure those connections to tap into only the data and functionality that each user needs. Without having to wade through an entire application, users can work more quickly and effectively which, in an emergency medical situation can save critical time.

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UHB's emergency treatment services, known as A&E (Accidents and Emergencies), has specific metrics for ensuring timely care. Webalo made it possible to deliver those key performance indicators to administrators' smartphones so they can monitor compliance and take corrective action, if required, on the spot. The Webalo connections that created A&E Live Reports were configured in under a few hours.

Unlike traditional enterprise-to-mobile applications, Webalo eliminates the complexity, time, and cost associated with SDKs, custom programming, and months-long development cycles. As a result, UHB has no additional applications to manage and maintain. Jim Williams, UHB Application Development Manager, notes that "We can create things that are almost like disposable applications. We would never have considered doing something like that without Webalo."

"We are now including mobility in every discussion about new applications," Chilton added, "because if we can use Webalo to extend that application to users' BlackBerrys, it adds a new dimension of productivity."

Stephen Chilton considers Webalo to be UHB's strategic platform for all future enterprise-to-mobile access. "Webalo fits very nicely into our strategic vision for getting more value out of our mobile devices. It's astounding that we can deliver data and functions so fast and provide virtually instantaneous benefits to both users and patients. As a result, we've standardized on BlackBerry because of its security capabilities and MVS for mobile telecommunications, but our golden nugget that makes it all possible is Webalo. It's remarkable."

About Webalo

Webalo changes the economics of enterprise mobility. It provides the enterprise-to-mobile infrastructure that puts enterprise data and functions on smartphones 100 times faster than traditional approaches to mobile application development, and it provides personalized mobile capabilities that meet the individual needs of any end user.

Webalo technology eliminates the need for traditional mobile application development tools and custom programming to provide - in minutes or hours, instead of the usual weeks, months, or years - mobile access to the specific enterprise data and functions that smartphone users rely on to do their jobs. Rather than build new mobile applications or purchase proprietary mobile versions of a vendor's enterprise applications, organizations can use Webalo to let administrators easily select, from their existing enterprise applications, the exact data and functions that mobile users need so they can work more efficiently and productively.

Webalo - available in hosted and virtual appliance versions - lets non-IT business administrators easily and rapidly configure the connections between smartphones and enterprise apps from vendors such as IBM, Oracle, SAP, and Microsoft, as well as from in-house applications. Then, in seconds, Webalo conforms the settings to the native user interface of any Android, Apple, BlackBerry, or Windows Phone smartphone or tablet.

Founded in 2000, Los Angeles-based Webalo is privately held. Additional information about Webalo's products, customers, and partners is available at www.webalo.com.