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Polaris Surgery Center Case Study

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– Matt Thompson, Business Operations Manager

About the Surgery Center

The Polaris Surgery Center is located in Westerville, Ohio, outside of the Columbus metropolitan area, and features some of the area’s finest board certified surgeons including a highly skilled surgical team trained in all areas of pre-operative and post-operative care. The surgery center is an outpatient facility, conveniently located inside the OhioHealth Westerville Medical Campus building.

The Polaris team takes pride in being one of the most complete outpatient facilities in the area. Polaris physicians are specially trained and skilled in the procedures they perform – and they’re dedicated to delivering the best outcomes for their patients. Experienced surgeons perform leading edge surgeries to treat a wide range of health problems and chronic conditions. Specialties include general surgery, orthopedics, sports medicine, foot and ankle, podiatry, hand surgery, pain management and gynecology.

The Situation

The small team that manages supply chain processes at Polaris includes Aimee Goldhardt, facility administrator, Matthew Thompson, business operations manager, Katie Murphy and Richard Maynard, material coordinators. This busy team handles everything from Aimee’s oversight and management of the center, to Matt’s leadership and support of all non-clinical areas, including finance, human resources, business office and materials management, to Katie and Richard managing day to day supply chain functions from ordering, receiving, inventory, contracting and item master management.

As Goldhardt and Thompson came on board during the last year, they set aggressive goals for the surgery center, embracing technology and identifying opportunities to leverage outsourced resources that have helped improve, streamline and automate their processes. Meantime, Murphy and Maynard have built expertise using the Envi® supply chain system from Inventory Optimization Solutions (IOS), working in conjunction with extended “team members” at both Vizient and IOS. As a result, Polaris has achieved significant savings and system improvements throughout their organization.

Goals and Objectives

“As a surgery center, where our doctors are continually advancing care and working to identify new treatment options, maintaining both current and new products is a constant challenge,” said Goldhardt. “To keep up, we’re continually negotiating new contracts through Vizient and our local team, to ensure we get the best pricing on the right products and keep building visibility to what’s in use in the center.”

“One of our main areas of focus is to improve our item master,” Goldhardt continued. “Because we’re continually looking to provide our surgeons with the new products they request – while working to be extremely efficient and cost-effective – we need visibility to what’s already in use within the organization, so we can identify like products and see if they’re already on a contract. We’ve identified the need to continuously improve product data in our item master. Without improving our data, it’s extremely difficult to search, create good product comparisons and negotiate new contract pricing. We’ve set a goal to address this need.”

POLARIS
SURGERY
CENTER

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– Aimee Goldhardt, Facility Administrator

Identifying Process Improvements, Driving Results

“As data was originally entered into our item master several years ago, the descriptions from supplier catalogs were used to enter the product and specifications,” said Murphy. “The issue is that suppliers don’t necessarily put their descriptions uniformly into catalogs, so our item descriptions now vary, and many of the descriptions are vague. We find that nouns and adjectives, and overall product specs, appear differently in item master descriptions. This means when we want to search for like products – for example, we want to identify a 3.0 headless screw, non-titanium and compare vendors and contracts – searching is difficult to impossible because the descriptions are so inconsistent. We’ve now standardized the way we enter product data, but we are also working to retrofit old data. This area represents significant cost savings opportunities so we’re committed to making improvements.”

“One of the biggest benefits to Polaris of using the Envi system has been having a Provista customer service representative working with us – managing orders to make sure everything is correct, checking backorders, checking pricing,” said Murphy. “As a result, we don’t have this on our plates, so our team is freed up for other activities, staying focused on tasks to ensure everything runs seamlessly within the facility.”

“We continually focus on updating and improving contracting and spend management,” added Thompson. “With Envi reporting, we’re able to strategically negotiate contracts. We’re identifying some products that we can eliminate and in turn, getting better pricing on others.”

“Our organization has benefitted from our team’s use of Envi and moving to more automated processes, like barcode scanning for example,” said Goldhardt. “We recently had a team meeting at which we all agreed, we’d never give up scanning. It makes the team so much more efficient and makes doing things that used to be time-consuming, manual tasks go quickly.”

“Our supply chain success is a team effort,” concluded Goldhardt. “We work with our extended team members at Vizient to track our spend to ensure we’re buying on contract. This has helped drive significant cost savings. So far, we’ve focused purely on the med-surg area and exact match items. Within the scope of this work, we’ve already identified over \$84,000 in savings, and from here, we can grow the effort to include a broader set of items. So you can see how this ties to our goal of improving data in our item master. As we complete the task of standardizing naming conventions, we’ll identify even more savings while giving our surgical team what they need.”

Best Practices Implemented

The Polaris team is focused on continually enhancing best practices in several key areas, including:

- Improved contract alignment
- Identification of items for consolidation
- Enhanced, standardized product descriptions throughout item master, to help improve search functionality and product comparisons
- Identification of new savings opportunities, beyond initial set of med-surg products
- Improved item management throughout the facility