

case study

CREATING ACCOUNTIBILITY: How One Health System Optimized Courier Operations

Experiencing Greater Courier Route
Efficiency With MCE

The Customer

As the only Idaho-based not-for-profit health system with locations throughout the state, St. Luke's focus is not only on treating patients, but also on creating a healthy community of people. With an overall goal to continually evolve to better meet patients' needs, improve outcomes, and lower costs, one area that needed attention was the specimen courier operation.

The Situation

St. Luke's internal specimen courier team consists of about thirty-eight users. Twenty-three are couriers and the remaining members are the lab administrators and dispatch operators. Ten routes adds up to a lot of daily and weekly stops to manage. Regularly scheduled stops to transport specimens and slides include hospitals, clinics, and outpatient draw sites that serve the pathology group.

As couriers made their way through daily routes, they manually recorded each visit to keep track of where, when, and what they picked up and delivered. Dispatch would review the daily route with each courier and call them if they needed to make changes throughout the day. Overall this was a time-consuming process for courier and administrators, and often become even more time consuming if a specimen went missing.

"Lost specimens caused huge accountability issues for us," remarked Jordan Harris, Pathology Supervisor for St. Luke's Health. "We struggled to provide supporting documentation when a specimen did not arrive where it was supposed to be," he explained. This situation caused credibility issues for his team in an industry where relationships and customer service are key. "The busier we got, the more we realized we needed a better solution."

The Challenge

The typical daily challenges that couriers and administrators face are more difficult when processes are manual. Cumbersome manual processes slow down and further burden essential tasks in the specimen courier operation:

- Tracking lost specimens
- Finding the most efficient daily route for courier
- Accurately recording pickups and deliveries of specimens

These issues are not necessarily independent of one another, making each situation critical to the next-not to mention the impact they have on the customer experience



One of the biggest hurdles with their existing process was the inability to track specimens. In addition to customer service issues lives could be at stake if pick-up drop-off of time-sensitive specimens, like bone marrow, are not transported efficiently. A lost specimen, in the case of bone



Recording Courier Stops

Every site is different for St. Luke's couriers. Some sites are mail pick-ups; others are mail and specimens. Sites often have batches of specimens with varying requirements (e.g., stored at room temperature or refrigerated) that demand attention to detail. Managing these requirements manually made the job difficult to perform accurately and slowed down courier transport time. If a courier picks up a dozen samples but forgets to log even one of them in, specimen accountability quality of service may be impacted.



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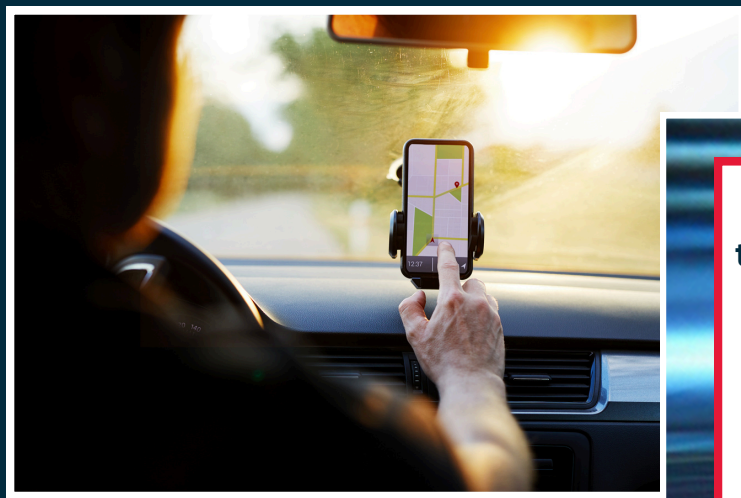
THE KEY BENEFITS OF USING MEDICAL COURIER ELITE

- Virtually eliminates lost or misplaced specimens
- Creates courier schedules based on clients needs
- Provides positive proof of delivery
- Enables couriers to efficiently handle time-sensitive pickups
- Improves response time, accountability, and customer service



Route Optimization

Priority stops, traffic conditions, and unplanned stops that get added into the day's route schedule can greatly impact courier efficiency; moreover, knowing which route might be fastest on any given day can be a challenge. "each morning courier mapped their route based on the orders of the day," said Harris. "When a last-minute request for pickup came through, it would force the courier the courier to rethink their whole route," Harris added.



“With MCE we virtually eliminated the guesswork. If there was an error in the reconciliation process at the time of the delivery, the system would alert them, so it’s basically foolproof.”

-J. Harris, St. Luke’s

The Solution

When St. Luke’s decided it was time to automate portions of their process, they found that Taylor Data Systems had already developed an ideal product: Medical Courier Elite (MCE). “It was clear these folks needed the process in order to improve credibility with each of their clients,” said Dave Taylor, Owner of Taylor Data Systems.

today, St. Luke’s courier team uses the Zebra TC27 mobile computer, complete with the MCE app and cellular voice and data connectivity-no clipboards, no pens. MCE is intuitive and requires little training. The TC27 is synchronized in real-time with all their sites and routes for the day, and it is optimized for the most efficient drive time. The mobile device has a high-performance barcode scanner built in, so when the courier arrives at the site, each barcode is scanned on the hazmat bag to confirm the contents.

After implementing MCE, the courier team no longer deals with accountability issues. In fact, now they can add helpful notes to detail their stops to indicate that no specimens were picked up, or that supplies were delivered, or mail was picked up, etc.

“With MCE we virtually eliminated the guesswork. It’s clear based on the data in the system where the courier was at any given time. If there was an error in the reconciliation process at the time of the delivery, the system would alert them, so it’s basically foolproof,” explained Harris.

The Results

The ability to optimize courier routes based on orders for the day saves time and alleviates stress on the courier. And when those last-minute pickups are requested, all the dispatcher needs to do is add the request to a route and the driver will be alerted of the change.

“We’ve dramatically increased the efficiency of our operation with MCE,” remarked Harris. “We’re continually improving because we can set certain goals and actually be able to track our progress. Today we’re able to make better informed decisions that allow us to provide outstanding service and support to each client.”

Contact us today to discover how to improve the specimen collection and delivery operation in your faculty with MCE.



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