

Allocate Workforce Solutions Case Study

Health Care Australia

Efficiently staffing 35 private hospitals across Australia is a demanding business, that's why Health Care turned to Allocate Software to help achieve optimal staffing.

- There was no consistency, with each roster manager compiling the roster differently.
- The group did not know how effectively it was using its labour force.
- Money was wasted unnecessarily hiring agency staff.

Health Care selects Allocate Software Pty Ltd

Health Care has had rapid growth since it was formed in 2005, becoming one of the largest networks of private hospitals in the country, with over 7,000 staff. It takes pride in delivering premium care to all its clients and patients through special services, facilities and medical technology.

With each hospital having its own rostering system, none of them automated, it was impossible for Health Care to ensure full staffing efficiency. In 2013, the decision was taken to conduct a pilot project at Gosford Private Hospital in New South Wales to install Allocate Software, the complete automated rostering solution. Based on a successful outcome of the pilot, Allocate Software was rolled out to the hospitals within the group.

The challenges

Project leader Michelle Rouillon, the National Program Manager of Health Care, outlines the challenges her organisation faced because of its antiquated rostering systems:

- The lack of a clocking-in system meant employees had to fill in their timesheets manually.
- Over 4,000 pieces of paper then had to be scanned and faxed to the payroll team in Victoria before every payrun.
- Limited information about the availability of staff makes the rostering process very inflexible.

Allocate Software and Health Care collaborate to plan the project

Health Care began scoping in February 2013, meeting with the Allocate team.

This was part of the Implementation Planning Study Phase, three months of discussions between Health Care and Allocate, scoping the details of how the Allocate Solution would meet Health Care's requirements.

The process was collaborative, with Allocate prepared to customise its approach. Normally parallel runs of the old and new rostering systems are undertaken, but in this case Health Care's risk plan and a very detailed testing approach rendered this unnecessary.

Michelle Says:
"That meeting set the scene for a good working relationship. It was a really helpful exercise, with demos and the right people who could answer our questions."

Michelle Says:
"Labour costs are critical in the private hospital sector. We needed to be proactive."

" We have come out of the dark ages of the paper world into the bright world of computerised roster control."

Michelle Rouillon, PMO & Project Manager at Health Care Australia

Cultural change assistance

There was concern about how employees would take to the new system, especially as many of them had never used a computer.

Another concern was how employees would react to the introduction of biometric scanning, in which people clock in simply by swiping their finger.

Here Allocate was able to help with an engagement program, bringing to bear its depth of experience in the health industry.

A series of staff forums was held to explain what the new system would mean to them.

Allocate provided Michelle with a diagram which showed that finger scans were instantly encoded by the system, in a way that kept them secret and prevented them from being accessed by anyone.

Allocate also provided posters to instil pride in the new technology, and assisted with emails keeping staff fully informed of developments.

Rolling out the system

On 1 May 2013, the Allocate pilot project at Gosford Private Hospital kicked off.

On 21 October 2013, the system went live at Gosford Private Hospital. *"I knew it was a success because there were just the right number of swipes on the first day for the number of people on duty,"* says Michelle.

With the success of the pilot, the rollout began, with Maitland Private Hospital following on 24 February 2014, Toronto Private Hospital, near Lake Macquarie in New South Wales, on 31 March 2014 and Lingard Private Hospital in Newcastle on 30 June 2014.

Reaping the Benefits

Michelle outlines some of the major benefits:

Baseline rosters. "In the health care industry, we live and breathe work hours per patient day, the metric that shows whether staffing is optimal or not." Rosters can now be maintained two weeks in advance, and it is easy to see where staffing is under or over the baseline.

Award interpretation. All the award rules are built into the system, greatly reducing errors. "Now the system can tell a roster manager: hang on, you are about to put someone on who hasn't had a 10-hour break between shifts. In particular, we can make sure we get the pay right. This is critical, because if you get a rule wrong with 300 nursing staff, it can lead to all sorts of problems."

The group appointed a National Workforce Manager to take full advantage of the much higher level of information generated by Allocate Software.

Time savings. The staff no longer have to spend time filling in timesheets. Staff can simply log into the system to put in leave requests, indicate availability for shifts, look at the rosters coming up, or check on when their shift starts. They can do all this from home or at the special computer workstations set up for them at each hospital.

SMS alerts. "This is a beautiful feature of the system," says Michelle. "Say the roster manager gets a phone call at 7am that someone can't do their shift that night. Previously, trying to find someone to fill the shift was often too hard – they would get an agency person in at great expense."

Plans for the future

After success at Gosford Private Hospital, HealthCare is rolling out Allocate Software to all 15 hospitals. The next step is to integrate the Allocate Solution to payroll, seamlessly linking payroll with rostering and taking yet another step to delivering greater efficiencies.

Michelle Says:
"Now at the press of a button the roster manager can send text messages to 20 nurses to ask them if they could do the shift."

Michelle Says:
"The level of data now available to the CEO, the Director of Nursing and on the Executive Group is unbelievable. We can see things about our staffing that were never apparent before,"

"Allocate helped me every step of the way with the first implementation, and at the same time actively educated me so we could become self-sufficient for the rest of our hospitals."

Michelle Rouillon, PMO & Project Manager at HealthCare Australia

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About Allocate Software

Allocate Software Pty Ltd is the leading supplier of workforce and compliance optimisation solutions for organisations with large, multi-skilled workforces. Using Allocate Software's workforce and governance optimisation software, organisations can deploy the right people with the right skills, to the right place at the right time, allowing organisations to match operational demands with workforce supply ensuring efficiency, safety and compliance whilst reducing costs. Headquartered in London with regional offices in Australia, the UK, USA and Sweden, Allocate Software provides services and support to an international customer base in key vertical sectors including: Healthcare, Defence, and Maritime.