

WellStar Health System  
deploys Avaya Aura<sup>®</sup>  
Session Manager and  
SIP technologies for a  
leading edge enterprise  
communications solution



Marietta, Georgia – WellStar Health System has as its mission “to create and deliver high quality hospital, physician, and other healthcare related services that improve the health and well-being of the individuals and communities we serve.”

As a not-for-profit health system comprised of five hospitals, 15 medical imaging centers, and over 80 doctors’ offices and urgent care facilities, WellStar serves 1.3 million area residents – providing over 63,000 hospital admissions, 40,000 surgeries, 11,000 maternity deliveries, 273,000 emergency room visits, and 1.1 million physician visits per year.

## Challenge

The challenge was to develop an enterprise telecommunications and unified communications solution for the five hospitals, 15 medical imaging centers, and over 80 doctors’ offices and urgent care facilities that comprise WellStar Health System – making patient safety, clinical

efficacy, and communication with patients and their families the top priorities.

## Solution

- Avaya Aura® Session Manager 6.0
- Avaya Aura® System Manager 6.0
- Avaya Aura® Communication Manager 5.2

- Avaya 9600 Series Deskphones
- Avaya Modular Messaging.

## Value Created

- Cost savings on trunking estimated over 40%.
- Other cost savings achieved through extending new applications on an enterprise basis;

deploying previously outsourced IT services in-house and providing access on a network basis; eliminating outside conference costs through network audio and video conferencing; saving on IT time, travel, and equipment through centralized management of the enterprise solution.

- Productivity increases based on easy dial systems, efficient conferencing, unified communications, and other time-saving features of the enterprise solution.
- Enhancements in communications that improve patient safety, clinical collaboration, and customer service.

## “Technological advancements that assist us in saving and improving lives”

A recent “Report to the Community” published by WellStar told the people they serve, *“We believe you deserve nothing less than investments that are world-class, in every way – from recruiting and retaining talented physicians and advanced practitioners to acquiring technological advancements that assist us in saving and improving*

*lives.”* (WellStar 2009, “Report to the Community”).

During the past decade, WellStar Health System has utilized Avaya telecommunications technologies successfully, with seven primary locations each running Avaya Communication Manager and distributing the service via EPNs and gateways. *“Historically, WellStar approached its telecommunication technology on a divisional basis,”* stated Debra Naderhoff, Executive Director, Telecommunications. *“However, we are now transitioning to managing our communications at an enterprise level. After extensive planning and examining all of the options, it was clear to us that the Avaya strategy of flatten-consolidate-extend (FCE), coupled with the benefits of Avaya Aura® and SIP, would be the best way to invest for the future.”*

## A solution that meets many goals and provides numerous benefits

Naderhoff also defined the order of priorities for WellStar. *“In healthcare, we’re very much aware that there are situations when seconds can make*

*“I knew that I wanted to move to Avaya Aura as soon as I heard about it. It’s the next logical step in a flatten-consolidate-extend strategy – for cost savings, connectivity, reliability, and leveraging all the telecom resources efficiently on an enterprise basis. We’re very happy to see that Avaya has placed such a strong focus on making SIP technologies available for a full suite of enterprise systems. It’s already starting to work out beautifully for WellStar.”*

*- Debra Naderhoff, Executive Director, Telecommunications*

*the difference between life and death. Because of this, we have established a set of priorities in which internal communication is first and foremost. In the clinical world, for*



*example, a nurse needs to be able to dial a code when a patient is having difficulties, so getting the code team to take care of whatever is necessary is our highest priority—along with the extensive collaboration that world class health care requires. We structure ourselves around making certain that these functions work infallibly. The next most important aspect is communication between facilities. Third is having the ability to make an outbound call or receive an inbound call. All of these priorities are vitally important to us, but patient safety and clinical collaboration come first.”*

Following are goals that the IT team developed for their evolving Avaya Aura solution:

- Flexibility to deploy on a phased basis
- Redundancy and reliability
- Interconnectivity, utilizing one switching system
- Consolidation, so that applications are delivered to enterprise facilities from a central source
- Cost savings

- Productivity increases
- Effective audio and video conferencing

WellStar is working with an Avaya channel partner to establish the foundation for their evolving enterprise solution. They are installing Avaya Aura® Session Manager 6.0, Avaya Aura® System Manager 6.0, Avaya Aura® Communication Manager 5.2, Avaya 9600 Series Deskphones, Avaya IP Agent, and Avaya Modular Messaging.

Naderhoff stated, “I knew that I wanted to move to Avaya Aura as soon as I heard about it. It’s the next logical step in a flatten-consolidate-extend strategy – for cost savings, connectivity, reliability, and leveraging all the telecom resources efficiently on an enterprise basis. We are quite clear that SIP is where we’re headed because it is a protocol that is set up to handle voice, video, and data superbly well. We’re very happy to see that Avaya has placed such a strong focus on making SIP technologies available for a full suite of enterprise systems. It’s already starting to work out beautifully for WellStar.”

## Goals

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WellStar has almost completed its installation of Avaya Aura at several of its facilities. Session Manager and the SIP phones have been tested and, according to Naderhoff, they are working “exactly as described.”

Naderhoff commented, “Engineering this latest technology to work with our newer, as well as our older, Avaya systems provided a challenge that our Avaya channel partner resolved with ease. They continue to bring total solutions – from engineering to maintenance and support – and to provide a value that fits into the WellStar telecommunications roadmap.”

“When we look at WellStar’s vision of delivering world-class healthcare, we put a lot of thought into the impact on our customer base, which includes the patients and their families,” Naderhoff said. “To be able to pick up and dial any WellStar number, to transfer that call seamlessly through the organization, to have centralized operators, and to use technology that will help them connect patients and families to the right number the first time they call – all of that is really important. We are pleased that the

*technologies, engineering, and planning that we’ve put in place are making that happen.*

*“At an internal level, we are also looking at many important advances. We now have the technology to accommodate the unique needs of our different facilities and, at the same time, to work on enterprise solutions in other areas such as pharmacy applications and scheduling patients at the hospitals.”*

## Flexibility, reliability, and the ability to migrate toward full utilization of SIP

Junior Cook, Chief Telecom Architect, stated, “From a technical standpoint, it’s going to be much easier to maintain one system rather than seven; but for an organization of our size, you can’t just flip a switch and make that happen. Avaya Aura Session Manager and SIP give us the ability to use some of our traditional older equipment even as we start utilizing the new technology. We can migrate as we choose – tying our dial plans together, manipulating digits, and moving things as the business dictates.”

“One of things I like about our Avaya Aura SIP-based platform is that we have three real-time registrations. If one or even two go down, we’re still able to function, and the phone service never misses a beat. From a redundancy standpoint, that’s a big thing for us, because it means that our phone service won’t fail us in critical life-and-death situations. We are well covered for business continuity even in a disaster recovery mode.”

- Junior Cook  
Chief Telecom Architect

WellStar’s IT team has found that Avaya Aura allows them to integrate easily with other switches, even to the extent of being able to interface with other dial plans. This is a critical feature, as WellStar gradually



integrates different systems across its many facilities.

*“We’re finding that SIP is a common ground for interfacing technologies. We already have several applications that utilize SIP, and SIP with Session Manager makes things match together much more easily. During the migration period, we can interconnect the sites with Session Manager and route them across the network, which eliminates the need for PSTN trunks. Because of Session Manager, even though we’re not using full SIP trunking, we can utilize our existing network and save on PSTN trunks. We’re changing out the old EPNs for newer equipment, and that allows us to save trunking from the old point-to-point because we’re now utilizing networks.”*

Cook feels that the most important benefit is that WellStar now has the ability to handle SIP and utilize SIP phones that can register to multiple servers. *“One of the things I like about our Avaya Aura SIP-based platform is that we have three real-time registrations. If one or even two go down, we’re still able to function, and the phone service never misses a*

*beat. From a redundancy standpoint, that’s a big thing for us, because it means that our phone service won’t fail us in critical life-and-death situations. We are well covered for business continuity even in a disaster recovery mode.”*

Cook also mentioned that WellStar is looking forward to further developing their several small contact centers with Avaya Aura contact center technologies. Wireless communications, widely used throughout the WellStar facilities, will soon transfer to wireless DECT products.

## Consolidation and connectivity result in cost savings and productivity increases

According to Naderhoff, one of the huge benefits of consolidation through an Avaya Aura platform is to have the ability to bring in-house many functions that were previously outsourced, such as audio and video teleconferencing, Clinical Data Repository (CDR), and Integrated Baseline Reviews (IBRs). *“In the healthcare field, there are many*

## Benefits

- Savings on new applications that can be extended, selectively, on an enterprise basis
- Network teleconferencing that saves travel time and the cost of outside conference services
- Elimination of charges for other outsourced IT services that will now be brought in-house and provided on a network basis
- Savings on IT time, travel, and equipment through centralized management of the enterprise solution
- Savings on SIP trunking

*opportunities to make applications available from a single source, and there will be significant savings as we do this,” Naderhoff explained. “This benefit is certainly part of the basic flatten-consolidate-extend strategy, but the value of it is best realized with Avaya Aura.”*

Naderhoff also anticipates enormous savings resulting from SIP trunking. *“As we proceed with our roadmap, we will eliminate a lot of PRIs and replace them with SIP trunking. The anticipated pricing, even on a conservative level, will give us an unbelievable amount of savings, based on preliminary estimates from some of our network services providers. We don’t have hard figures from all of them yet, but overall we know that we’re going to end up with a level of savings that we’ve never seen before. We estimate that we’ll save over 40% on line costs alone.”*

In addition to savings on trunking, direct cost savings related to the Avaya Aura deployment will include:

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Productivity increases will be realized when employees access the directory and can transfer calls easily throughout the network. Naderhoff also noted, *“We’re going to have applications available on a network basis that people will be able to offload work onto. That will be a great productivity enhancement that we couldn’t afford to supply if we had to do it on a location-by-location basis.”*

Additionally, *“With Session Manager here onsite, we have an enhanced ability to project the capital that might be needed and the savings that we’ll realize with a number of*

*time-saving, productivity-enhancing applications. For example, we have evaluated and plan to pursue both audio and desktop conferencing. We can look at that cost and bring it in-house when we’re ready. We’re also in the process of pulling together how much we spend with outside services to do things such as appointment reminders and follow-up calls. We can price out that application and add it to those sites that might not take advantage of it today.”*

Naderhoff concluded, *“As we move forward in establishing our platform of integrated dial systems, messaging, unified communications, presence, and other important systems, it’s going to be absolutely key to be able to handle the complexities that come into play – especially when we’re spanning two area codes, a lot of different exchanges, and diverse equipment. It’s great to know that Session Manager is designed to take care of the idiosyncrasies to make it all work for us on an enterprise basis.”*

For more information on how Avaya Intelligent Communications can take your enterprise from where it is to where it needs to be, contact your Avaya Account Manager or a member of the Avaya Connect channel partner program, or access other collateral by clicking on Resource Library at

[www.avaya.com](http://www.avaya.com).

## Systems and Applications

- Avaya Aura® Session Manager 6.0
- Avaya Aura® System Manager 6.0
- Avaya Aura® Communication Manager 5.2
- Avaya 9600 Series Deskphones
- Avaya Modular Messaging

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All statements in this case study were made by Debra Naderhoff, Executive Director, Telecommunications; and Junior Cook, Chief Telecom Architect.

## About WellStar Health System

The vision of WellStar Health System is to deliver world-class healthcare. WellStar, a not-for-profit health system, includes Cobb, Douglas, Kennestone, Paulding and Windy Hill hospitals; WellStar Medical Group;

Urgent Care Centers; Health Place; Homecare; Hospice; Atherton Place; Paulding Nursing Center; and WellStar Foundation. For more information, visit [www.wellstar.org](http://www.wellstar.org).

## About Avaya

Avaya is a global provider of business collaboration and

communications solutions, providing unified communications, contact centers, data solutions and related services to companies of all sizes around the world. For more information please visit [www.avaya.com](http://www.avaya.com).

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07/11 • UC4709-01