

Mobile Productivity for a Home Health Workforce

Dell Venue 11 Pro* 2 in 1 devices with Intel® Core™ i5 vPro™ processors and Windows* 8.1 help VNA California increase quality of care, convenience, and efficiency



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Director of IT,
VNA California

Recognizing IT's growing importance to healthcare, Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) California recently hired a director of IT and gave him a mandate to lead technology-enabled innovation. One of the director's first steps was to move VNA California's mobile health professionals from a diverse mix of aging laptops to Dell 2 in 1 devices powered by the Intel® Core™ i5 vPro™ processor. Gerrard Gier, the new IT director, says the refresh is helping mobile clinicians save time, strengthen their relationships with patients, and deliver higher-quality, more collaborative care. The technology refresh also improves security and manageability, while giving the company a strong foundation for ongoing innovation.

Challenges

- **Organizational effectiveness.** With a rising demand for cost-effective, in-home healthcare services, VNA California is committed to proactive innovation. Older client platforms were holding the company back.
- **High-quality, personalized care.** Home health professionals need powerful, adaptable, and unobtrusive tools to support clinical requirements, build strong patient relationships, and collaborate with other members of the healthcare team.
- **PC management and data security.** VNA California has a small IT support staff to support a highly mobile workforce. Having a variety of older laptops added complexity to the management and data security/compliance challenges.

Solution

- **Modernize with 2 in 1 devices and Windows* 8.1.** After a three-month evaluation process, VNA California moved its mobile clinical employees to Dell Venue 11 Pro* 2 in 1 devices based on the Intel Core i5 vPro processor and Windows 8.1.

Technology Results

- **Greater performance and flexibility.** Employees can access familiar, full-function enterprise applications as well as a new generation of mobile communication capabilities and touch-enabled Windows 8 apps.
- **Improved PC management and data security capabilities.** A standardized environment, proven management tools, and the enterprise-class management and security capabilities of Intel vPro technology give Gier's IT staff more power to simplify remote management while increasing data security and compliance.

Business Value

- **Enhanced patient experience.** Smaller, more capable 2 in 1 devices help clinicians focus on patients and make the most of their time together.
- **Cost savings.** Gier says VNA California saves USD 200 per device on acquisition costs while enhancing productivity, performance, and agility.



2 in 1 devices help visiting nurses make the most of their time with patients

“Care is more personal when you’re in the patient’s home. You don’t want technology getting in the way...We wanted to get the most capability for the dollar, and that was the Dell Venue*. The tablet is very mobile, but you’ve also got the full keyboard, which helps with our user transition from a laptop to a tablet. The Microsoft management and security software is enterprise-proven. We like the native security and management potential that Intel® vPro™ technology gives you in addition. And the size was perfect—the device fits right in your lap as you’re sitting with the patient.”

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- **Higher-quality, more collaborative care.** VNA California mobile clinicians can collaborate more effectively with other health professionals, which helps improve patient care and avoid hospital readmissions. VNA California is positioned to remain on the forefront of a fast-changing industry.

2 in 1 Devices with Intel® Processors Inside Enhance Care and Efficiency

Many people express a deep desire to remain at home despite serious health challenges. VNA California helps them do that. One of Southern California’s largest in-home healthcare providers, VNA is a nonprofit company that offers home health, palliative care, and hospice services to patients and their families in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and North San Diego Counties. Its mobile workforce includes visiting nurses, physical therapists, social workers, bereavement specialists, chaplains, and other clinical professionals.

VNA California’s client fleet included older laptops from three vendors and a sprinkling of consumer-grade tablets. Surveying that environment, Gier saw an opportunity to improve patient care and organizational efficiency, while positioning the company to be more agile and increase mobility for the future.

“Care is more personal when you’re in the patient’s home,” Gier explains. “You don’t want technology getting in the way. The laptops were older technology, so they were bigger and more obtrusive. They didn’t have modern user-interface and communication capabilities, so nurses ended up using their smartphones to capture clinical images or function as mobile hot spots. The new devices, with greater mobility, connectivity, touch, and voice—those things together are changing the perspective on care, and allowing technology to be less intrusive and less invasive while increasing quality of care. The environment is also much easier for IT to manage.”

Choosing Devices

After surveying the available choices, Gier's endpoint strategy team narrowed its focus to Apple iPads*, Microsoft Surface 2* tablets, and Dell Venue 11 Pro 2 in 1 devices. Key criteria included enterprise-class management and security, robust performance, adoption of mobility tools, excellent support for McKesson Home Care* and other applications, and ease of use for VNA California's diverse users.

"We wanted to get the most capability for the dollar, and that was the Dell Venue," Gier recalls. "The tablet is very mobile, but you've also got the full keyboard, which helps with our user transition from a laptop to a tablet. The Microsoft management and security software is enterprise-proven. We like the native security and management potential that Intel vPro technology gives you in addition. And the size was perfect—the device fits right in your lap as you're sitting with the patient."

A Win for Nurses, Patients, and IT

Gier says the 2 in 1 devices with Intel Core vPro processors are helping VNA California improve collaboration, quality of care, nurse productivity and satisfaction, and systemwide efficiency. "These devices are lighter and easier to carry around, and they create less of a barrier between client and clinician," he states. "They're faster than our previous point-of-care devices, so they provide the clinician with a more responsive experience. We're planning to utilize telehealth as well as video chat, which enhances collaboration."

The 2 in 1 device's versatility, with its built-in communications capabilities and ability to switch between tablet and laptop in seconds, increases the device's practical value for VNA California. "Being able to use the device as a tablet yet have the mobile keyboard right there helps with documenting care and taking wound images," says Gier. "The images taken on the device are clearer, and you don't need a second device like a smartphone to take a picture and then import it. You can type when you need to. As we get more applications with touch and voice interfaces, we'll be able to use those capabilities further."

Standardizing on a single device has streamlined management and troubleshooting, helping Gier's IT staff keep information secure, costs contained, and users productive. Gier says he also plans to consider how he can incorporate Intel vPro technology into VNA California's endpoint management and security road map. "We're a nonprofit, so we're always looking at fully utilizing the native capabilities of anything we purchase," he comments. "We are very interested in Intel vPro technology as a way to enhance our mobile device management and security."

Expanding Collaboration

With the devices already delivering a broad range of benefits, VNA California is preparing to capitalize on additional capabilities built into its Dell tablets and Intel Core vPro processors. Gier's IT team is conducting a proof of concept (POC) that uses the devices' mobile communications capabilities to let clinicians communicate and collaborate in real time from patients' homes. Currently, clinicians do their documentation on the device, but have to wait until they have virtual private network (VPN) and Internet connectivity to transfer their work to the VNA California servers.

Lessons Learned

Seeking to empower your mobile workforce? Gerrard Gier offers IT leaders the following suggestions:

- **Know your users.** "If IT doesn't understand our users' issues and perspectives, how can we help them?" Gier says. He has done ride-alongs with visiting nurses to understand their challenges and see how technology innovation can help address them.
- **Be proactive.** Explore how 2 in 1 devices and other mobile platforms based on Intel® Core™ vPro™ processors can enhance user workflows and endpoint management. Create a road map, and move forward systematically.
- **Collaborate.** Gier worked with clinician educators, IT support staff, and clinical staff to identify device requirements and evaluate trade-offs.
- **Ease technology adoption.** VNA California's mobile professionals range from tech geeks to reluctant users. To ensure success for all, Gier's team set up a lab so nurses and other users could try out the new devices. The team offered online training materials and gave clinicians time to become confident with their new tools before using them in the field.

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For patients with complex health needs, home health nurses are pivotal players on an extended care team. Close collaboration among team members is essential to avoiding costly and disruptive hospitalizations and trips to the emergency room for patients, and potential readmission penalties for hospitals. With real-time communications through 3G and LTE connectivity, VNA California health professionals can collaborate more effectively with other members of the patient’s care team. Nurses will be able to access the most current information in the patient’s electronic medical record (EMR) and share their updates immediately. Last-minute schedule changes can be communicated through the EMR rather than over the phone.

Another POC is using Microsoft Lync* to expand clinicians’ high-definition video chat and conferencing capabilities. “We are also considering more telehealth tools and technology to take our patient care to another level of service,” Gier adds. “In addition, we are deploying the Intel-based tablets to enhance the effectiveness of our administrative and IT support staff.”

Proactive IT

VNA California’s endpoint strategy is part of a broader effort by Gier and his team to deliver IT innovation. Gier is counting on software developers to keep pace with the adoption of new user-interface capabilities and device types. “We would love to see the software vendors moving faster with things like touch and voice,” he says. “Healthcare is moving to a mobile workforce. We need the software to move forward with us.”

As the population ages and more patients cope with the long-term effects of chronic illness, many healthcare experts expect home-based care to become a hotbed of growth and innovation. VNA California is positioning itself to lead that effort. “VNA California and our IT department are taking a proactive approach,” Gier says. “We don’t want to just be IT firefighters. Healthcare moves too fast for that. We are making a commitment to innovate.”



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