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CASE STUDY
RAYS

A STATE-OF-THE-ART TRANSFORMATION

Visage® 7 delivers results for Rays

Whether it's called a "capital expenditure" or an "asset investment," the act of spending money on new information systems can be painful. The modern radiology practice is not an inexpensive endeavor, and every executive wants to know—is the latest advancement really worth it?

More than a year ago, Greg Rose, MD, PhD, pondered this question as he looked for a top-notch enterprise viewer. With a healthy capital budget at his discretion, Rose searched for specific performance parameters in a system with outstanding reliability. Ultimately, the CEO of EmCare Radiology chose the Visage 7 Enterprise Imaging Platform, powered by amazingly fast, server-side processing.

rays

Fifteen months later, Rose is able to view his purchase through the lens of hindsight. Not one given to hyperbole, the experienced radiologist is nonetheless generous in his praise of San Diego-based Visage Imaging.

WE COULD HAVE PICKED ANY VIEWER

"Visage has more than paid for itself through its efficiency, reliability, and integration with our system," says Rose, who also serves as President and CEO of Rays, a thriving teleradiology practice in Littleton, Colorado. "Anybody looking for the cheapest viewer will find that their overall net financials will be lower than they will be with Visage. Pay the slightly higher cost, because overall you'll be retaining more money per unit time by using the Visage 7 viewer."

"When you evaluate the cost of a viewer, it helps to use real data and include soft elements. When the improvements in efficiency, ease of use, and error reduction outweigh the added cost, you are saving money. The additional part which is hard to weigh is that Visage basically works so you aren't distracted with technical issues. This lets you focus on the study. So based on our analysis, why does Visage cost what it does? Because it's worth it."

After evaluating many different systems from companies large and small, Rose is unflinching in his assessment that no viewer is absolutely perfect–and he has little patience for companies that claim perfection. The chore then becomes finding the viewer with the fewest flaws. For those pondering a similar purchase, Rose recommends speaking to colleagues who have actual experience working with the viewer in question. "Talk to radiologists who use it every day and ones who have used something else," says the 53-year-old Rose, who is in his fifteenth year of radiology practice.

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With high scores in third party teleradiology surveys in 2010 and 2011, Rays sought to add to its winning recipe with a new enterprise viewer in 2012. They did not take their selection lightly, and time has shown they made the right decision. "We could have picked any viewer," muses Rose. "We looked at all kinds of viewers with the goals of ease of use, reliability, efficiency and completeness of the toolset. We have a sort of inner check on our system. Since I take reading shifts along with my rads, the system has to work!" Rose attributes his positive experience thus far to Visage's patented streaming technology that

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rapidly displays current and prior studies of nearly any size, over minimal bandwidth. "You do not have significant wait times for images," he says. "It beats the usual DICOM pull or pre-fetch technology, and it works well with our workflow."

Ted Tzeng, Vice President of Technology at Rays, sees Visage 7's raw speed as a feature that benefits all facets of their teleradiology practice. Even in the case of a PET/CT (current, plus multiple priors) with 7,000-8,000 images, it takes only seconds for the studies to be displayed and reconstructed on-the-fly. "If you were to transfer that across a 6-meg cable connection, you would probably be there for a few hours transferring those studies to a diagnostic workstation with a traditional viewer that requires you to receive all of the images and store them locally before you can view them," says Tzeng. "With Visage, we don't need to do that. The radiologist just launches the studies and they are displayed in their entirety within seconds."

With a sizable portion of Rays' interpretations falling under general radiology and cross-sectional studies, Tzeng correctly assumed that Visage would easily meet all of their requirements. As for advanced visualization, Visage is equally as valuable as Rays seeks to expand its subspecialty business to view even the largest studies with no technological impact to their operations.

"The ratio of sends per study also went down," adds Tzeng. "As opposed to having to send a study to 10 different locations, and some of them possibly outside of our network, we only have to get our customer's studies to the Visage 7 server in our data center. One send and it's streamed from that point forward."

From a quality perspective, Rose believes Visage is particularly helpful in viewing 3D reconstructions from the original axial series or "the roots" as he calls them. "When customers send over static reconstructions, sometimes the crosshairs are interpreted incorrectly," he explains. "With Visage doing the on-the-fly reconstructions, the crosshairs are always 'correct'. This improves the quality of the interpretation."

To smooth out the inherent complexities of launching a new enterprise viewer, Visage tech support sought early on to minimize the challenges of switching and integrating with existing technology. Reaching a human was never a problem for Rose and his staff members. "The tech support has been good, and it has only gotten better," says Rose. "You can get in touch with Visage better than the larger name products where nobody would even think to make a phone call because they would never get a phone call back."

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"Customer support is willing to do it your way to get you to achieve your goals without just blowing you off," continues Rose. "They were cooperative in getting this to integrate with our technology. Other places would likely have been trouble."

ATTRACTING THE BEST RADIOLOGISTS

The viewing medium is literally the space where the rubber meets the road. As such, a state-of-the-art diagnostic viewer is naturally appreciated by radiologists.

"When you are looking to hire, Visage 7 can help with your recruitment," confirms Rose. "Radiologists want their viewer to work seamlessly. They don't want 15 different worklists and three different viewers. They want to set it up the way they want it. Teleradiologists want to read from 100 different places with the same hanging protocols. Whenever a head CT comes up, they want it to look the same no matter where it comes from."

For Rose and Tzeng, Visage was part of a natural progression toward state-of-the-art technology that could deliver practical and measurable results. "We just upgraded our RIS," says Rose. "We figured if we were going to upgrade to a cutting edge RIS, it would be improper to not have a state-of-the-art viewer to go along with it. It makes sense to our clients and to anybody coming in who wants to work with us. One of the major attractions of people working with us has been our unified worklist with so many useful bells and whistles. And with Visage 7 as our viewer, it really compliments the RIS and attracts excellent radiologists."

Radiologists stuck with relatively primitive legacy viewers may believe that all viewers essentially operate the same. Rose and Tzeng say "we know better," and their point of view is quickly adopted by radiologists who soon wonder how they ever got along without Visage.

Visage 7's remarkable study display speed translates to greater volume, even for so-called fast radiologists. Rose has been doing teleradiology for a while and reports a personal productivity increase of 5% to 10%. An 'average' radiologist may experience a productivity boost of up to 30%. For those on the average side of the speed equation, the practice of saturating radiologist's workstations with studies before the start of shifts is now a thing of the past—because according to Tzeng, "It's just not necessary with Visage."

On the administrative side, Visage has dramatically reduced the collective overhead on Rays' infrastructure. Principally due to technical benefits, Rose and Tzeng report that

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Greg Rose, MD, PhD and Visage 7

administrative personnel resources can be reallocated for other priorities—a practice that results in even more time devoted to quality control and customer service.

Ultimately, Tzeng and Rose recommend Visage 7 for its ability to reliably help radiologists do what they do best—read and interpret studies. "We have been able to get more out of our resources, as we have increased volume by 25%," enthuses Tzeng. "Our systems have largely stayed the same—the number of servers, resources allocated to the environment—and now we are handling significantly more volume with Visage than before."

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