

CASE STUDY: Sound Masking in a Hospital Call Center



Summa Health System

Challenge

Reducing Distractions and Ensuring HIPAA Compliance in a Hospital Call Center

Summa Health System is one of the largest integrated healthcare delivery systems in the state of Ohio. Formed in 1989 with the merger of Akron City and St. Thomas Hospitals, the nonprofit system now encompasses a network of hospitals and other health centers. The campus of Summa Akron City Hospital also includes a call center that receives incoming customer service calls for all of the providers in the system. The call center's operations are split into two main functional groups: one that handles incoming calls for appointment scheduling and connecting patients with their doctors, and one group of nurses that takes patient calls, evaluates their health needs, and takes appropriate action. The space includes an open area of about 150 workstations for workers in both groups, separated by a hallway. A ring of 25 private offices for other hospital administration staff surrounds the open area.

Bill Maikranz, the System Director of Telecommunications and Call Centers, manages or supports the call center and all of its 100+ employees. Many of his employees informed him that noise distractions from all of the phone discussions were distracting to them while they were on the phone. Additionally, the on-call nurses mentioned that being able to overhear the patient calls constituted a potential HIPAA violation. Maikranz agreed and began looking for a solution to the call center's noise problem. He remembered hearing about sound masking technologies from time to time throughout his career and asked his telecom integrator, Paul Raies from DAB Communication (also in Akron) if he carried any products that might be able help. Raies had actually installed QtPro™ Sound Masking in another section of the hospital, so was able to demo the product there for Maikranz and other purchasing decision makers. Having left impressed by QtPro and its capabilities, Summa had DAB Communications install the product in the call center.

“ Since implementing QtPro, we notice the reduction in noise distractions and have a better overall sense of speech privacy, but the sound masking itself is barely noticeable. The call center is much more comfortable and productive now. The system itself is also very easy to use. ”

Bill Maikranz
System Director of Telecommunications
and Call Centers
Summa Health System

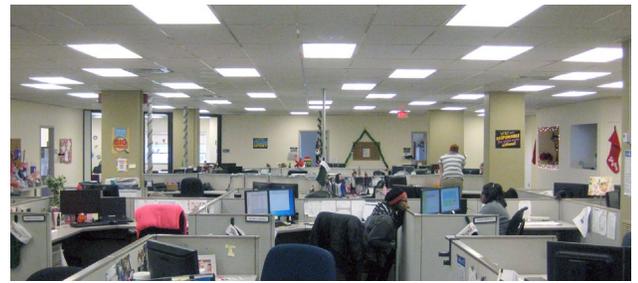
Solution

DAB Communications installed small, barely visible QtPro™ emitters (speakers) in the drop ceiling throughout the call center environment. The emitters were connected by cables to a Qt® 600 control module residing in the server room. Emitters and a module were also installed at the hospital switchboard area in the main hospital. The emitters in the call center break room play background music through them, in addition to the masking. Automatic ramping was programmed into the system, allowing for the masking noise to be slightly louder at times when the call center is at its busiest.

Result

A More Comfortable, Productive, and Private Environment

Summa Health has been able to facilitate greater speech privacy with their customer service calls using QtPro, helping ensure phone conversations are not overheard and remain HIPAA compliant. Phone conversations are also less distracting to fellow co-workers so they can focus on delivering excellent patient care and customer service. The staff was notified beforehand that the system was being implemented and many noted how pleased they have been with the results. Due to the success of the call center implementation Summa Health is considering adding Sound Masking to other parts of the hospital, including nursing stations and patient rooms.



About Summa Health System

Formed in 1989 with the merger of Akron City Hospital and St. Thomas Hospital, Summa Health System is a nonprofit healthcare system that now encompasses a network of hospitals and community-based health centers, a health plan, a multi-specialty group practice, an entrepreneurial entity, research and medical education, and multiple foundations. The mission of Summa Health System is to provide the highest quality, compassionate care to their patients and to contribute to a healthier community.

About Cambridge Sound Management

Cambridge Sound Management, Inc. manufactures QtPro sound masking systems to help organizations across multiple industries protect speech privacy, reduce noise distractions, and fuel workplace productivity. Powered by direct-field Quiet Technology, QtPro works by emitting a uniform, barely perceptible background sound at the frequencies of human speech. Cost effective and easy to install, QtPro is deployed in hundreds of millions of square feet of space throughout the world including commercial organizations, healthcare facilities, financial services, government agencies, and educational institutions.

About DAB Communications

From assessing voice and data needs to buying the raw phone equipment to installation, testing and training, DAB Communications manages all stages of upgrading or maintaining businesses telecommunications systems. For over 20 years, DAB Communications has been focused on building a solid track record of reliable installation and repairs of advanced office telephone systems and communications solutions for customers in the greater Akron/Canton area. DAB Communications also provides sound masking solutions for businesses and offers a wide range of peripherals including wireless phones, plantronics headsets, music on hold, and a new panic button for doctor's offices and hospitals.

Case Study Overview

SPACE

7500 square feet in of open office and private space across one floor in a busy call center environment with low cubicle partitions.

CHALLENGE

Call center environment led to increased overheard cross-talk and noise distractions.

SOLUTION

Qt® 600 Sound Masking System



RESULT

A call center where private conversations are kept private and Summa Health's nurses and representatives can more easily focus on delivering excellent patient care and support.