



## West Tennessee Healthcare Delivers Continuous Financial, Reporting, and Clinical Quality Improvement with Axiom

**W**est Tennessee Healthcare's relationship with Syntellis Performance Solutions and strategic partner Kaufman Hall spans more than two decades, nearly as long as CFO Jeff Blankenship has been on the job.

Over the years, the nonprofit hospital system adopted software for budgeting, capital planning, productivity, management reporting, and financial planning. Some were legacy Kaufman Hall products and others were Axiom. Two years ago, West Tennessee reimplemented the entire suite onto the Axiom Cloud to bring uniformity to reporting, leverage best practices, and reduce maintenance. More recently, the system adopted Axiom™ Decision Support, Comparative Analytics, and Rolling Forecasting.

"What I love about this suite of products is Axiom's flexibility," says Blankenship. "You can do a core set of things, but you also have the flexibility to add other functionality and databases and create your own variations. You also get the benefit of Kaufman Hall models and subject matter expertise."

### One repository for financial data

During a typical day, about 150 people interact with Axiom in some way, including Finance staff who use the system daily and departmental users who review Axiom's

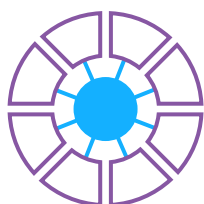


productivity reports and management reports. With the Axiom Cloud, users can access the system from laptops and mobile devices without having to download software — a great benefit for occasional users — and share a report by emailing a link, which the recipient accesses after logging into the system.

"The Axiom Cloud has been great for our Finance team because they learn one report writing system and one architecture, which is something I think people take for granted sometimes," Blankenship says. "We have one department table and one infrastructure in terms of management hierarchy, which saves us a ton of time."

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**Jeff Blankenship, CFO**



8 Axiom software products,  
1 unified platform



1 FTE's time reallocated thanks to  
automated data normalization



150 users accessing  
cloud software seamlessly

Software updates can be scheduled on West Tennessee's timetable, but as CFO, Blankenship appreciates being on the latest software version to take full advantage of upgrades and enhancements.

"I get most of my information straight from Axiom," Blankenship says. "I rarely go into the general ledger system, and I love being able to see decision support data and management reporting data in the same place."

### Axiom Cloud's budgeting benefits

Although the health system has been using Axiom™ Budgeting for years, the move to the cloud brought new benefits. Formerly, Finance staff performed exhaustive testing of highly customized budgeting templates they had built. But the standard templates in the cloud version performed just as well.

"Moving to the standard template eliminated much of the maintenance and testing we had to do in a custom environment," Blankenship says. "That would be true for anyone who's coming from Excel or other types of systems where Finance staff had to set up and maintain tables."

The health system operates on a July 1 fiscal year, and work on next year's budget had already started when the pandemic hit. "Adopting rolling forecasting was on our roadmap, and when COVID-19 hit, I thought to myself if there was ever a time to implement rolling forecasting, this is it," Blankenship says. Because the Axiom architecture already is in place, the installation of Axiom™ Rolling Forecasting will be quick.

The CFO believes rolling forecasting will improve agility in the face of fluid situations caused by the pandemic. It will also change the perception of managers who are accustomed to that once-a-year document and believing that a line item is "their" money. "This gives us the ability to help users understand that budgets are fluid and constantly adapt as we shift priorities," Blankenship says.

### Time savings allow for more analysis

West Tennessee Healthcare adopted Axiom™ Decision Support two years ago, in conjunction with the installation of a Cerner revenue cycle system.

"We're starting with some of the standard dashboards and the Axiom intelligence tools, which I love," Blankenship says. "I use those a lot to pull up something, look at profitability, or view demographic data."

Using Axiom™ Comparative Analytics, West Tennessee immediately realized time savings from normalizing data and maintaining separate tables, which formerly required one FTE. Comparative Analytics layers on top of existing organizational data, and in conjunction with the National Hospital Flash Report, the Board of Directors has used the data to better understand how COVID-19 is impacting the health system and peer organizations across the country.

Understanding how to improve clinical quality is another challenge West Tennessee used Axiom to help solve. Blankenship says internal quality data often didn't reflect what was reported externally because of a disconnect in clinical data and lack of standard quality definitions, but Axiom™ Clinical Analytics supported a common language and provided a single view of quality data.

The software serves an important role during Board discussions. If there are questions, Blankenship can pull up a dashboard to explain the reasoning behind the numbers or manipulate data to show other possible avenues or outcomes.

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### Standard data on a unified platform

When asked to name the primary benefit of Axiom, Blankenship says the single platform and data standardization bring high reliability to the information flowing through the health system. Standardized data is much easier to maintain across departments and accounts because it's in sync across software — giving staff more time and trusted data to analyze and improve overall decision-making.

"One of the things I'm excited about is the way data is visualized. We can make it very clear to anyone how we interpret our results," Blankenship says. "What's good? What's bad? And what's borderline? I really like Axiom's web forms and the tools. There is a KPI block that is the same when you're looking at Comparative Analytics versus when you're looking at Budgeting or Rolling Forecasting or whatever, so a nurse director or someone on the frontlines can quickly understand, 'That's good,' or, 'Oh, that's bad.'"

After decades on the job, Blankenship knows constant improvement is critical and values technology partners committed to their success. "We need somebody who's on the continuous improvement journey with us, not just trying to sell us the next product or the next thing," Blankenship says.

"There are an awful lot of Syntellis folks who have been around for a while just like me, and so it's good to have those relationships and talk through things together," Blankenship says.

### Organization profile

- 90 medical facilities, including seven hospitals
- Serves >500,000 in 19 West Tennessee counties
- Region's only certified comprehensive cancer and stroke centers
- Treats >185,000 ED patients in eight hospitals annually

