

Comparative Data Provides Actionable Intelligence to South Georgia Medical Center

There's data, and then there's intelligence — data that's trusted, actionable, and empowers organizations to make better decisions derived from a deeper understanding of hospital performance and market trends.

With the recent implementation of Strata's Comparative Analytics, South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC) stands ready to take its data reporting to the next level, leveraging the largest, most timely data set in the industry with the ease of data collection that takes minutes — not days.

"The primary thing I needed was accurate, reliable target benchmarks to better understand my labor efficiency," said Daniel Rickman, Business Intelligence Director for SGMC. "I also was looking for a much better way to report on different statistics within peer groups, letting department directors go in and look at dashboards themselves. I got both with Strata."

More Timely Data and Easier Data Collection

Rickman was charged with establishing his department as the nucleus for decision support throughout the health system by leveraging internal and external benchmarking data. At the time, SGMC used IBM (now Vizient) Action OI. Rickman quickly discovered several weaknesses, including a cumbersome data entry process, quarterly data updates, and the ability for department heads to cherry-pick their peer groups, rather than employing common standards.

The health system already employed several software solutions from Strata, including Axiom™ Budgeting, Axiom™ Financial Planning, Axiom™ Performance Reporting, and Axiom™ Productivity Reporting. Rickman engaged the company to optimize its software solutions and discover a better path forward.

"We have an extremely collaborative relationship with Strata," said Rickman, a 15-year veteran of the health system. "The person who led our optimization eventually became our Comparative Analytics project manager, so we already had an established relationship with her."

Implementation was easy because many of the data connections already existed. The main lift was defining the functions of each department for reporting purposes.



Larger, more complete, and timely data set



Three days per quarter in labor savings



More accurate peer groups bring actionable comparisons



Rickman said the difference between software is like night and day, saving his department three days every quarter, with the added benefit of monthly data rather than quarterly updates.

"With Comparative Analytics, we don't have to submit anything because the data is taken from stats that are already there, versus with Action OI where we were still doing manual entry," he said. The prior solution also left room for error and frustration. "Sometimes, it would take several hours to figure out what it was talking about to correct it."

Uniform, Actionable, and Truthful Intelligence

Rickman projected that Comparative Analytics will bring return on investment through cost reductions in both supply and labor costs. It will also give health system leaders uniform, actionable, and truthful intelligence to make those decisions through a common reporting framework built on peer groups more closely aligned with the applicable departments of SGMCM.

After implementation, the first step was to establish new annual target benchmarks, working in conjunction with departmental leaders, followed by building plan files for budgeting. Comparative Analytics helps guide those sometimes difficult labor and expense conversations by providing comparisons to peer organizations and previous budgets.

Fast Facts

- South Georgia Medical Center, Valdosta, Georgia
- 418 licensed beds across four hospitals
- 15-county service area in South Georgia
- 600 providers and 2,600 employees

The Business Intelligence Director said he appreciates the attention that Strata paid to the organization during implementation and beyond. "It's very important to me to not have a vendor say, 'We'll take a look at it,'" Rickman said. "I wanted a partner to engage us in the process of making things more efficient, using best practices, and teaching us about the system as we go along."

Rickman added that the investment South Georgia Medical Center has made into its Axiom solutions is already paying dividends for the health system.

"We rely on Axiom when making major financial decisions for the present and the future of the organization," he said. "The way I look at it is, those financial decisions impact the future of 3,000 jobs, including mine."

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