

ASP “Literally Saved My Business”

NOTE: MedQuist Inc. acquired Speech Machines in April 2001. Speech Machines’ ASP product was re-branded as **DocQment™ Enterprise Platform**. However, clients who subscribed to the platform prior to the acquisition (such as Accuscribe) did so under the Speech Machines name.

An Application Service Provider (ASP) allows access to software applications via the Internet without requiring the purchase of hardware or licensing of software. The applications operate from a data center environment.

Off to a running start

In 1995, Trudi Griffith decided it was time to make a change. After 20 years as a medical transcriptionist, she took a leap of faith and formed her own transcription company, Accuscribe, so she could work from her home in Monck’s Corner, South Carolina. With her existing contacts, she was able to open for business and secure two accounts that same day.

Griffith’s business grew over the next five years, and she added clients as well as several transcriptionists. She even started teaching a medical transcription program at a local community college, where she found an unlimited supply of MTs. After teaching them in the classroom, Griffith would put them to work to continue their training on the job.

“I shopped around, but the price was the same. I realized this was just a Band-Aid fix because in a few years, I would have to invest in an even larger system. I needed a way to expand and continue to grow without costing me all of our profit. I didn’t want to work for free and give all my profits to another company for the computer purchase, not to mention the service contract.”

–Trudi Griffith

Reality gets ugly...and fate takes a twist

As Accuscribe’s business grew, however, so did the steep costs of on-premise equipment. In 2000, two years after investing \$14,000 in a well-known system, Griffith faced the need for a \$37,000 upgrade. She realized that the cost of capital investments required to continue operating with her current system would make the company unprofitable, and she began looking for alternative ways to grow the business—without the expensive capital investments.

“Ironically, I was close to making the decision of completely giving up the business altogether,” Griffith explains, “when I got a phone call one day from a Speech Machines representative who had the wrong number. The more I talked to this person on the phone, the more interested I became. I asked for a demonstration.”

In August 2000, Accuscribe was one of the first clients to move its business onto the Speech Machines ASP platform. In the three years hence, the company has experienced significant growth. Griffith has witnessed many changes to the system, offering feedback and suggestions that have influenced its development. Griffith is not only a supporter of the system, she continues to personally speak to MedQuist’s prospective clients, and enjoys helping them make the decision to try DocQment Enterprise Platform. “I didn’t see how I could afford NOT to go with [it]. It was the ONLY option out there that would allow me to stay in the business that I had invested five years of my life into and allow me to grow affordably and uninhibited.”

Old fashioned methods, old fashioned headaches

The cost of an on-site transcription system wasn't Griffith's only concern. She also dealt with recurring equipment failure and the inability to deliver work on time. Using dictated analog audio files meant travel time and expense for tape delivery, but the doctors still didn't want to give up their tape-based dictation systems. Reviewing her MTs' work was also a challenge; performing QA involved the painstaking task of manually rewinding tapes to find reports. In addition, it was taking days to complete bookkeeping tasks, and the billing was often late. "[It] sounds like the dark ages now," Griffith notes.

Accuscribe began to look for alternatives. "I needed...options that were reliable and able to incorporate the [latest] technology," explained Griffith. Foremost were the needs for efficiency and time management capability.

To say she did her homework is an understatement. The move to an ASP platform was a big decision because the technology was new. Griffith performed extensive research, hiring an attorney and a CPA to investigate the company. She studied the technology, read everything she could, and talked with the sales representative repeatedly until she was convinced that she wanted to make this move.

The Internet is the answer

Moving to an Internet-hosted application would address all of Griffith's major concerns: equipment and maintenance expenses, upgrades, turnaround time, and travel issues. What she really needed was efficiency and time management tools—exactly what DocQment Enterprise Platform had to offer.

Griffith recognized the value of moving the business onto an ASP platform rather than investing in equipment, as well as the opportunity to pay only for the services her company used. In addition to the simplicity of the solution, she embraced the DocQment Enterprise Platform's spectrum of features, including the incorporated voice and data files, QA capabilities, billing reports, and the overall simplicity of billing and bookkeeping.

"I spent days doing bookkeeping," she says, "but when I saw that all I had to do was print out a billing report and attach it to a statement, to me that was a godsend, because I hated bookkeeping.... My billing would never be late again."

Once the system was up and running, Griffith says she saw unlimited benefits. She cites the ability to easily interface and download ADT demographics from different systems, the ability to immediately pinpoint a record's status and to assign stat priority when needed, and the workflow management capabilities. "No other service can come close to the technology..." she states, "I could go on and on."

A business revitalized

What about the workflow improvement and turnaround? According to Griffith, she can guarantee 24-hour turnaround or even better, and the system's efficiency means unlimited growth potential. Best of all, the increased efficiency means shorter revenue cycles for healthcare facilities.

“Other organizations would benefit from the efficiency of the system, the time-saving features, and the easy accessibility of the system management reports that will save them time and money, and reduce the [number] of employees needed to perform these...functions.” In addition, she points out that “the search functions are invaluable, allowing us to follow a STAT job through the system and deliver it within minutes.”

Griffith recognizes another important benefit of DocQment Enterprise Platform: it’s easy to learn. “The teaching capabilities are incredible. ...[The MTs] learn to master the system and the terminology in record time.” In addition, she notes that the system has helped her to “bring their quality of work up several levels. I can train the new students on the system so fast that they are producing superior work and top line counts in weeks, where it used to take months.”

In addition to a specified PC, “another benefit is the fact that the only equipment needed is a headset and a foot pedal. No more monster dictation machines or maintenance contracts. [At the same time,] the audio sound quality is unsurpassed.”

She also sees benefits for physicians. With this platform, physicians don’t have to change the way they dictate or buy new equipment; they can use toll-free numbers to dictate, and eliminate the hassles of using audiotape.

“There is no comparison,” remarks Griffith. “I have seen other wannabes, but they still do not have the audio and data file combined. They are still operating the audio from one source while transcribing into another system. I can proudly say, I have never seen anything compare to [DocQment Enterprise Platform].”

Investing in the future pays off

The platform “literally saved my business,” claims Griffith. “I had invested five years of my life, blood, sweat and tears building my business, and it was literally saved when I moved to the [ASP] platform. ... I took a chance at a time when this technology was just beginning. It proved to be a wise choice on my part. ... I am very happy with the result of that decision.”

Accuscribe is now profitable and has almost quadrupled in size since migrating to the new platform. In three years, the company’s volume has grown from 55,000 lines per month to almost 400,000 lines per month.

So how does the future look for Accuscribe now?

Griffith hopes that the line count will grow to 1,000,000 lines per month within the next year, a goal she feels is attainable.

“There are unlimited benefits... [like] the ability to grow as fast and as large as we want to grow without a costly upgrade to slow down the process....”

As far as keeping current with the system, upgrades are deployed automatically, and do not require equipment purchases. There are no service contracts, maintenance fees or ongoing expenses, and Accuscribe only pays for what it uses. Griffith says she’s been able to plan and stay ahead of the demand, which comes easier each year she’s on the system. “We wouldn’t have a profit at all if we were on the same platform as before. If we were still trying to do the [competitor’s] route, we would be broke or out of business.”