Four Technology/Process Improvement
Home Runs that Can Turbo-Charge Your
Lab's Billing/Collections Department

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**PAML**
Providence Health & Services
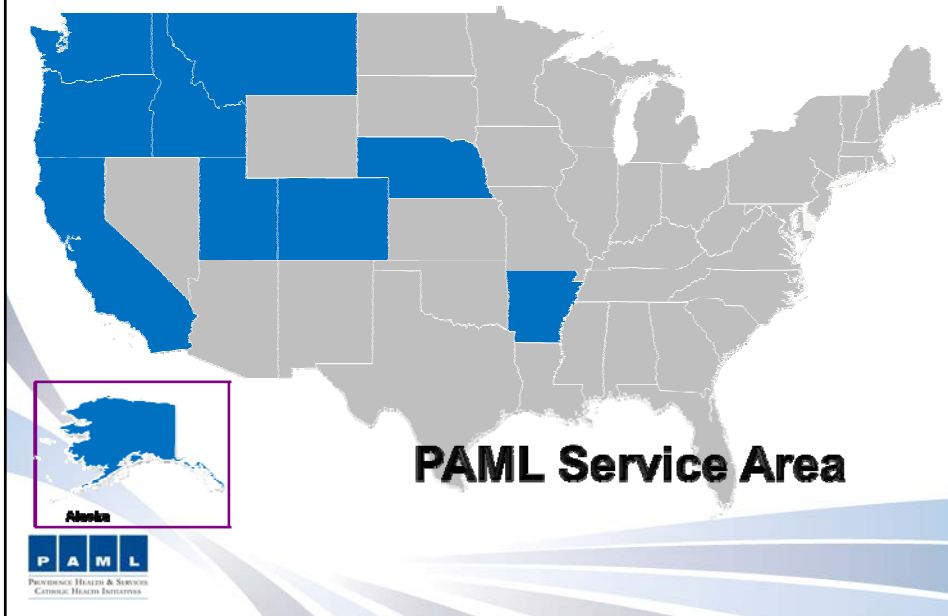Catholic Health Initiatives

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## About PAML



- **A joint venture between Providence Health & Services (PH&S) and Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), PAML is a full service clinical reference laboratory located in Spokane, WA.**

- **Ranked among the top ten reference laboratories in the nation and considered an industry leader in joint venture partnerships with community-based hospitals.**

- **Billing and collections provides services for thousands of clients, including 33 hospitals, averaging over 18,000 claims per day.**

**PAML**
Providence Health & Services
Catholic Health Initiatives

## About PAML
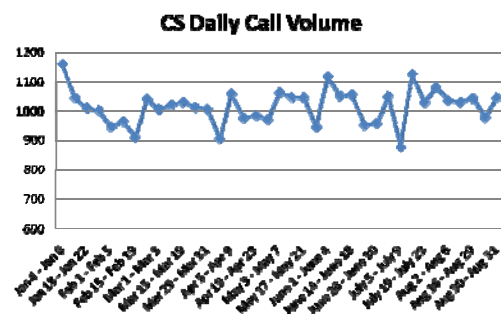


PAML Service Area

## Four Billing Department Challenges

- Customer Service Call Volume

- Processing Paper Requisitions

- Processing Paper Payments (Checks)

- Delays Related to Requisition Transport

How can we continue to grow as a company,
without a parallel increase in staff . . .
while maintaining our current service levels?

# Challenge:  Customer Service Call Volume



**CS Daily Call Volume**

## Challenge: Customer Service Call Volume

Why are our highly trained and highly skilled Customer Service reps processing credit card calls?

## Solution: A Credit Card Phone Queue

We already had the ability to create phone queues; so why not a credit card queue?
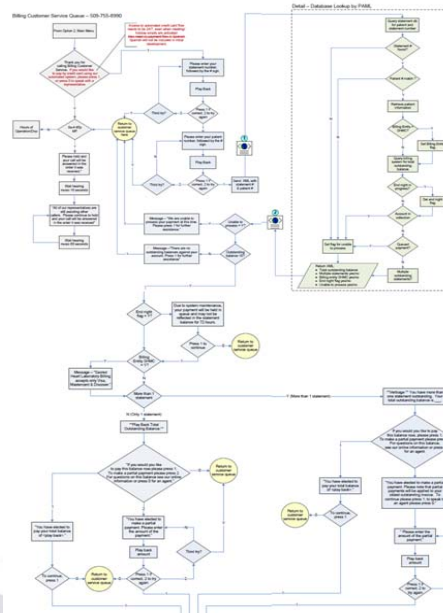
Immediate benefits:
- Easy task for temp workers, student help and lesser trained staff
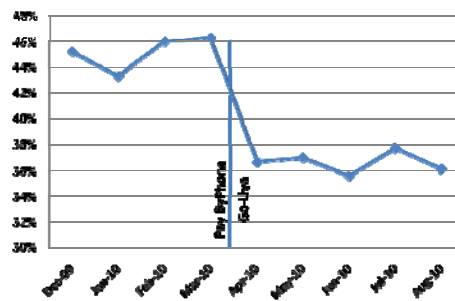- Immediate reduction in calls fielded by CS reps

## Solution: Automated Credit Card Teller

After reviewing some "off the shelf" solutions, we opted to build our own.
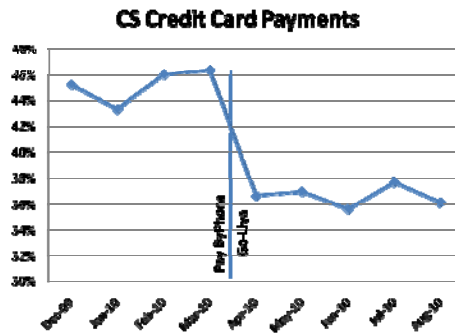


## Solution: Automated Credit Card Teller

## Solution: Automated Credit Card Teller

**CS Credit Card Payments**



### Benefits:
- Reduced CS call volume
- Reduced error rate

### The down side:
- Opportunities for unskilled staff eliminated
- CC calls were the reps' respite

### An Unexpected Benefit:
- Convenience. Callers are no longer limited to our office hours—evenings and weekends!
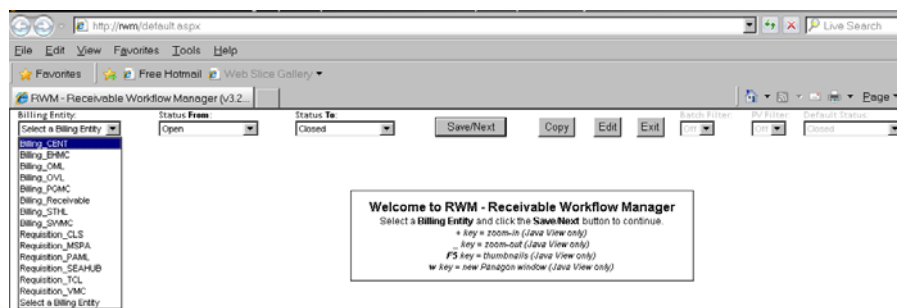
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## Challenge: Processing Paper Requisitions

## Challenge: Processing Paper Lab Orders

We already had an image storage solution in place
(FileNet). In fact the reqs were scanned and *then*
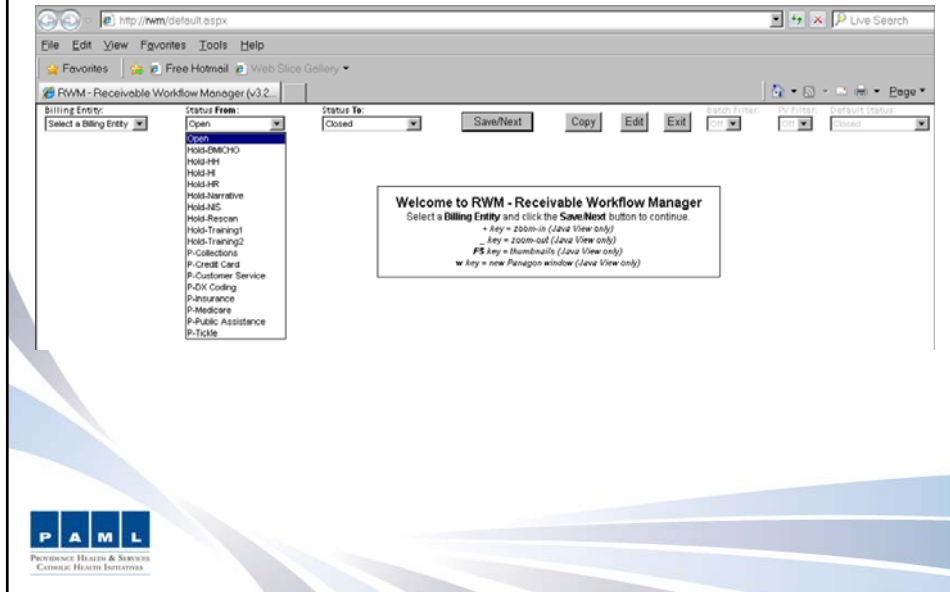delivered to billing to be processed in data entry.

So the image was already there,
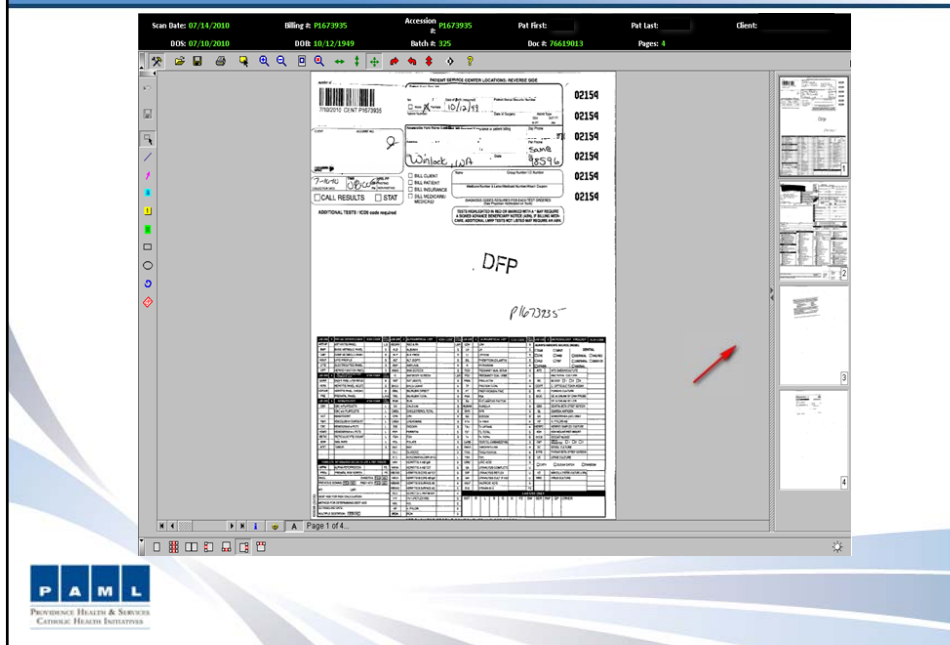but we had no way to efficiently utilize it.

## Solution: Requisition Workflow Manager

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## Solution: Requisition Workflow Manager

### Benefits

- Reqs no longer on the premises. Gone! Filing and sorting eliminated
- Evenly distributed workload
- FIFO – no exceptions
- Able to cut and paste, improving speed and accuracy
- QA can be completed in real time – immediate feedback
- Electronic audit trail of every touch to the req
- Broadly applicable - now using the same tool for all prescreening of reqs (performed by our Dx Coding staff) and for all correspondence that enters billing
- Moment by moment productivity monitoring . . .
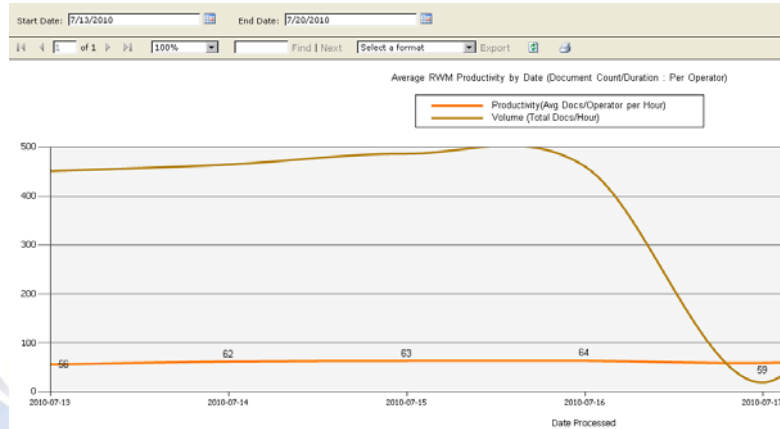
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## Solution: Requisition Workflow Manager

### Real-Time Status Updates

## Solution: Requisition Workflow Manager

**Productivity Metrics**



## Solution: Requisition Workflow Manager

**Drill-Down Individual Productivity Metrics**

### RWM - Requisitions Processed by User and Date Range (PROTOTYPE)

| User | Date Processed | Time Processed | Entity | Batch-Acc#-Billing#-Status (Click for QA) | Reqs Processed | Reqs/Hour (AVG) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ⊟ **PAML\AFRYER** | **07/19/2010** | | | | **1,233** | 132 |
| **PAML\AFRYER** | **07/19/2010** | ⊟ QA Group1 (1 to 10) | | | **10** | 188 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 16:58:50 | Billing_EHMC | 536 - E002041866 - E002041866 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 35 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 16:59:06 | Billing_EHMC | 536 - E002041265 - E002041265 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 16 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 16:59:20 | Billing_EHMC | 247 - E002040351 - E002040351 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 13 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 16:59:44 | Billing_EHMC | 247 - E002039576 - E002039576 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 23 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 16:59:58 | Billing_EHMC | 247 - E002039665 - E002039665 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 14 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 17:00:11 | Billing_EHMC | 247 - E002039812 - E002039812 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 12 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 17:00:31 | Billing_EHMC | 247 - E002039034 - E002039034 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 20 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 17:00:49 | Billing_EHMC | 247 - E002039903 - E002039903 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 17 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 17:01:16 | Billing_EHMC | 247 - E002039306 - E002039306 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 27 |
| PAML\AFRYER | 07/19/2010 | 17:01:31 | Billing_EHMC | 247 - E002038788 - E002038788 - Closed | Duration (seconds)--> | 14 |

## Solution: Requisition Workflow Manager

The surprise –

•Those trips to the storage shelf for reqs . . . our estimates were way off!

•That undetectable down time . . . leadership had no idea!



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## Challenge: Processing Paper Payments (checks)

- Reconciling batches. We ran two tapes (one on the checks, and another on the statement tops), the inputter would then have to match to the tapes. Even two sets of eyes often failed to catch an error.
- Keying errors. If someone entered the wrong statement number and applied funds to the wrong account, it was difficult to trace the error back to its source as the checks were sent off to the bank (no copy retained).
- Endorser issues. When it failed, the backup was a hand stamp.
- NSF and returned checks: because the patient (a child for instance) is in many cases different than the name on the check, we had no way to know which account was affected.
- Bank corrections could come back to us weeks after we've processed the check.
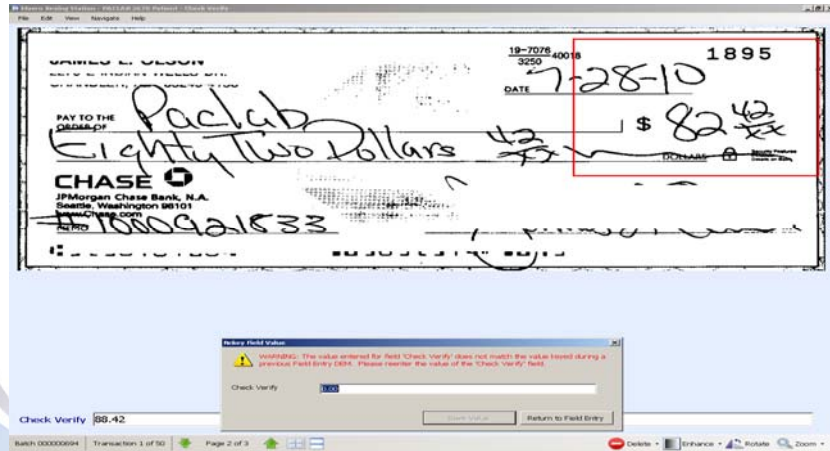
## Challenge: Processing Paper Payments (checks)



## Solution: Automated Payment Processing

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## Solution: Automated Payment Processing

Benefits:
- Easy to research issues
- Write-off of NSF and returned checks reduced
- Balancing of batches eliminated
- Reduced error rate
- Same day corrections from the bank
- Eliminated check transport for deposit and time at the bank
- Correspondence now processed through RWM
- Check retrieval is a snap!

## Challenge: Delays related to Req Transport

- Req unavailable to testing personnel, client services, and billing
- Transportation: Non-value added (bundling, packaging, prep for transport)
- Inventory (storing/filing); in some locations, reqs were alphabetized for local access
- Handling errors associated with each additional touch—and the last stop in the line typically carries the burden of missed pages

## Solution: Remote Scanning

Cost:
About $10K per site (license, scanner, PC, phone)

Additional Considerations:
- Space requirements (prep, storage, and shred bins)
- Staffing & oversight
- QA of images
- Decentralization of processes

## Solution: Remote Scanning

Benefits:

- Improved TAT on availability. In some cases, this can affect DSO
- Reduced handling errors/req loss . . . fewer touches
- Front end req review is now paperless via RWM, gaining the same efficiencies identified earlier
- An unexpected benefit: better able to control upstream issues affecting downstream processes when the process is moved further upstream (staples)

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## Summary

Customer Service Call Volume
   *Automated Credit Card Teller*

Processing Paper Lab Orders
   *Requisition Workflow Manager*

Processing Paper Payments (Checks)
   *Automated Payment Processing*

Delays Related to Requisition Transport
   *Remote Scanning*