

“Vocus allows us to do more with our existing resources, to be more efficient and organized so we can take on other projects. It’s like having a third staff person in our department.”

Kevin Gould, Director of Public Relations

Association Adds Efficiency Equal to Extra Team Member, without Adding Staff



Quality medical care depends on quick access to accurate patient records. In the healthcare industry, health information management (HIM) professionals act as the stewards of this vital information through dedication to the effective management of personal health information needed to deliver quality healthcare to the public. The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) represents more than 50,000 specially educated HIM professionals employed in more than 40 different work settings and 200 different job titles. Founded in 1928 to improve the quality of medical records, AHIMA advances the profession through advocacy, education, certification and lifelong learning.

Challenge

As a professional association, AHIMA represents the HIM profession and advocates for a number of healthcare information issues, requiring it to communicate to multiple audiences. AHIMA works with both public and private stakeholders to advance HIM issues through initiatives such as industry adoption of electronic health records, data quality and data standards, and privacy and security of health information.

Promoting such a broad range of issues, the PR team sought a more centralized, streamlined approach to contact and news management, as well as distribution and measurement. The team lacked a big-picture view of all activities, making it tough to evaluate its success and identify areas for more effort. “We needed an umbrella for all our PR activities, to organize, catalogue and keep track of everything to see what issues were being covered and where we were missing opportunities,” said Kevin Gould, Director of Public Relations at AHIMA.

Vocus Public Relations Solution

AHIMA chose Vocus’ online software product for public relations, a comprehensive solution for managing the full lifecycle of its PR needs. Though the association considered other options, Vocus offered the best solution for its needs, providing a centralized, integrated approach to all the team’s activities.

With Vocus, AHIMA has access to an extensive, continuously updated database of general and trade media contacts. Depending on the campaign or news, PR relies on several regular lists – kept current

with Vocus – or builds new, more targeted lists if needed, in minutes. Simplified list development freed PR to begin offering this as a valuable service to the association’s 52 state associations around the country.

AHIMA also distributes news through Vocus. With emails that come directly from an individual, AHIMA increases the chance media will notice the release. And as releases go out, Vocus stores a record of that with each recipient’s contact record, giving PR a complete history of all interaction with a contact.

Interactive Email Distribution Enables Proactive Follow-up

The association recently took its distribution a step further by adding Vocus Email Campaigns, which lets PR create electronic, interactive press releases containing buttons that recipients select for the information they need. AHIMA discovered the real value of Email Campaigns when inviting industry leaders to an important meeting to address healthcare IT issues with a key federal government official. With the interactive email feature, PR tracked who opened the invitation and made a reservation, and followed up by phone with invitees who had not yet opened or responded to the invitation.

“Email Campaigns allowed us to operate more efficiently, to see who planned to attend quickly, and know whether our efforts were effective,” Gould said.

With the Vocus News Gateway, electronic clips collected by LexisNexis Publisher feed into the Vocus system. AHIMA tracks not only stories that mention the association, but all news on health information issues.

Faster Reporting, More Strategic Planning with Analytics

Reporting with Vocus Analytics allows AHIMA not only to create reports quickly for management, but also gives the team complete insight into its own efforts. With Analytics, PR knows which issues receive more ink, and adjusts its focus to achieve more coverage on key topics. PR looks at which reporters have covered the association or key topics of interest, and which ones have not, then reaches out to build relationships with certain reporters.

“Because activities and results are all in Vocus, we can draw correlations,” Gould said. “We know how many reporters we contacted, how many responded, and then how many placements we got. It helps us connect the dots better.”

PR further uses Vocus to store all collateral materials, staff bios, photos and other important documents. Both PR team members easily access the documents when needed to support a pitch.

Results: Vocus Adds Needed Manpower, Measurement to PR Team

Vocus provides a centralized method and location for launching, tracking and evaluating all of AHIMA’s PR activities. With all information in a single place, and with Vocus Analytics, PR has valuable intelligence about where the association is covered and where it is not, empowering the team to be more proactive.

In part due to Vocus, media hits have increased since adding Vocus. PR reduces the time spent on list management, distribution, news management and reporting, freeing representatives to focus on coverage-generating activities. The manpower Vocus adds helps AHIMA reach its goals without bringing on more staff.