



- Bremen, IN
- 25 beds
- MEDITECH MAGIC



## Challenges

- Local HIE participation
- Limited internal resources
- Lacked interface solution/budget



## Results

- Real-time data exchange improves patient care
- Reduced demand on hospital staff
- Easy interface development/troubleshooting



# How a Hospital is Reaching Big Interface Goals with Forward Advantage's Connections Engine

Community Hospital of Bremen, located in Bremen, Indiana, had received several invitations over the years to participate in a local Health Information Exchange (HIE). Despite the desire to participate, the hospital lacked an effective interface solution to successfully participate. An interface engine was the obvious solution; however, the 25-bed, critical access hospital felt it didn't have the necessary programming and budgetary resources to make acquiring an engine a reality.

"We've had an HIE in our area for about 15 years that very much wanted to exchange data with us," says Linda Barrett, vice president of clinical services and information technology for Community Hospital of Bremen. "We explored the idea over the years but unfortunately felt that the cost of an interface engine, and the lack of internal programming staff, was just too prohibitive."

Community Hospital of Bremen was ultimately awarded grant funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration to facilitate the exchange of patient information with providers. At this time, the hospital's ambulatory physicians were moving forward with EMRs, with ARRA incentives to demonstrate meaningful use and connect directly to the local HIE. The timing and funds were in place to move forward with an interface engine solution, and Forward Advantage's Connections Engine proved to be the logical choice.

## Selecting an Interface Engine

The FA Connections Engine is designed to simplify the programming, configuration, and maintenance of interfaces for MEDITECH hospitals. Depending on customer needs,



the FA Connections Engine can be deployed and managed by Forward Advantage or maintained solely in-house by the hospital. The engine is highly configurable with drag-and-drop interfaces to simplify set up, and a Web-based design allows for easy monitoring.

A MEDITECH MAGIC customer, Community Hospital of Bremen evaluated five interface engines for a user-friendly system that would allow its limited IT staff to build and maintain the interfaces on its own. "Forward Advantage's MEDITECH experience, along with their product's affordability and ease of use were the major strengths," says Barrett. "We don't have programmers on site, and I have limited experience with HL7 interfaces. I knew we needed something user-friendly without requiring a lot of programming skills."

## Setting and Meeting Goals

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Community Hospital of Bremen recognized that it can provide a higher level of patient care by exchanging real-time data with the HIE, including: ADT information, lab results, transcribed reports, allergy information, and recent visits. The hospital's connectivity will also facilitate the direct exchange of data between its ambulatory physicians and the HIE. From a productivity standpoint the physicians need an electronic feed allowing them to access lab results and transcribed reports directly from their EMRs. "At the end of the day, what this will do for us is cut down on the phone calls and what our staff has to do to make sure the physician offices get their reports," says Barrett. "We anticipate that this will really streamline our processes, as physicians will receive these reports in near real time."

Community Hospital of Bremen also plans to use the FA Connections Engine to exchange data with the hospital's reference lab, the state department of health, and their new transcription company. "Right now we're exchanging information with an outside transcription company, bringing reports back into the system, and sending data to the state department of health," says Barrett. Prior to using an engine, the hospital had dedicated people placing transcribed reports into MEDITECH once a day, which created a big time delay. Now with the FA Connections Engine, reports feed back into the system in real time and can go directly to the hospital's EMR.

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***"We're already seeing an enormous benefit as we're getting those reports out, and they're viewable in MEDITECH right away."***

**- Linda Barrett**

*Vice President of Clinical Services and Information Technology*

## Successfully Monitoring and Troubleshooting

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FA Connections Engine uses a Web-based interface and alerts to facilitate system monitoring. "The monitoring piece is great," states Barrett. "The engine sends me an e-mail if an interface fails, so I don't have to worry about constantly checking the system." Furthermore, the engine was designed for

in-house maintenance with user-friendly troubleshooting. Prior to using an engine, Community Hospital of Bremen operated as the middleman when it came to errors with their limited, point-to-point interfaces. Troubleshooting typically involved creating a service ticket with MEDITECH, which the engine has now made a thing of the past.

***“With the engine I can easily go back and look at MEDITECH’s specifications, edit an HL7 message, and re-send it back through,” says Barrett. “I can also communicate with other vendors regarding what a message needs to look like for them to correct it for submittal.”***

**- Linda Barrett**

*Vice President of Clinical Services and Information Technology*

## **An On-Target Implementation**

Community Hospital of Bremen has been very pleased with the implementation services that Forward Advantage has provided. “The implementations have been much faster than initially anticipated,” says Barrett. “Our interface feeds to the state reporting agencies were up and running within only a week.” A major appeal to Barrett and her staff was the fact that the FA Connections Engine could be set up and maintained internally by the hospital, but they were also looking for a vendor to train and collaborate with them along the way. “We’ve been very pleased with the trainings and assistance that Forward Advantage has provided,” continues Barrett. “Although we wanted to primarily build the interfaces ourselves, it was helpful to know we had a vendor that could help if the interfaces became more complicated or we felt short on time.”

## **Advice for Other Hospitals**

Barrett’s advice for other hospitals is to not be intimidated by HL7 interfaces. “I was a little nervous about not having any programmers. However, I’ve found that I can do the HL7 interfaces, and I’m not a programmer,” says Barrett. “If you’re comfortable in MEDITECH as a higher-end, IT user, then you can do this. It’s key to get an interface engine that’s user friendly and a vendor that’s willing to train and assist you along the way. It’s a continual process; after you train, you need to start building your interfaces immediately and keep working on it.”

## **What’s in the future for Community Hospital of Bremen?**

Community Hospital of Bremen is currently evaluating PACS vendors and plans to use the FA Connections Engine to integrate with MEDITECH’s Imaging and Therapeutic Services application. Also on the horizon for the hospital is an upgrade to MEDITECH’s 6.0 platform, anticipated to begin in October of this year using Forward Advantage’s migration services. “We were not a previous customer

of Forward Advantage prior to acquiring the engine,” concludes Barrett. “We were comfortable with signing on with them for the 6.0 migration because of their MEDITECH history and experience. However, now that we have personal experience working with Forward Advantage, we have an increased confidence level in the impending migration.”

“Forward Advantage is delighted by this new relationship with Community Hospital of Bremen,” says Mike Knebel, vice president of sales for Forward Advantage. “We look forward to working with them on the upcoming 6.0 migration and assisting them with any future MEDITECH integration needs.”

### About **Forward Advantage**

*Since 1993, Forward Advantage has provided innovative and cost-effective solutions for healthcare organizations. With more than 1,200 customers, the company uses its deep expertise to solve a wide range of healthcare challenges by listening to its customers and collaborating with them on solutions that improve the healthcare experience with better access to information. Examples include: automated and intelligent report distribution, streamlined identity and access management, migrating and archiving legacy data, document management, EMR-integrated secure messaging, and interoperability solutions connecting hospitals and physicians. More information on Forward Advantage and its solutions can be found at [www.forwardadvantage.com](http://www.forwardadvantage.com).*

### About **Community Hospital of Bremen**

*Founded in 1948, Community Hospital of Bremen is a not-for-profit, 25-bed Critical Access Hospital serving the healthcare needs of Bremen and the surrounding communities. We are dedicated to providing high quality, compassionate care to the patients we serve. With the opening of our new facility in 2006, our motto “Our family caring for yours” is our pledge to offer the highest level of care by competent, caring physicians and staff. More information can be found at [www.bremenhospital.com](http://www.bremenhospital.com).*



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