

A blueprint supporting better care

An *xwave* Case Study

Eastern Canada's largest provider of continuing care uses *xwave*'s Core Technology Program to review IT systems and develop a blueprint for growth

The challenge: aligning infrastructure with new services and continued growth

Since 1962, Northwood has provided Nova Scotia seniors with services that, over the years, have expanded to include long-term care, independent living, home care and community outreach. Serving approximately 6,300 people throughout Nova Scotia, Northwood is the Atlantic region's largest not-for-profit provider of its kind. As their services have grown, so have their facilities, today accommodating everything from residential living and health services to a fitness centre and community centre. Now Northwood is growing again with the addition of a third site in West Bedford, on the outskirts of Halifax. Set to open in the spring of 2010, West Bedford will offer 150 beds in a home-like setting that is indicative of the organization's evolving, more community-based approach to care.

That evolution has had a significant impact on Northwood's information systems—systems that, in addition to longstanding functions such as admissions, human resources and finance, must now support services such as Internet access in rooms and web cams for remote visitation. In addition, as part of its outreach services, Northwood provides a home monitoring / emergency response service called Intouch. Offered province-wide, Intouch involves the use of portable and wearable call-devices that help seniors live independently and safely.

Together these factors have prompted various IT upgrades and expansion at Northwood—and, at the same time, a certain degree of infrastructure sprawl and issues around data silos, security, and reliability.

"We've been revamping our systems for the past five or six years—for instance, about 90 percent of our server environment is now virtual," explains Jay MacIntyre, Director of IT at Northwood. He adds,

"The new West Bedford facility has represented a good opportunity to introduce more new technology. It's also enabled us to address outstanding issues and make sure areas like security and server backup are as efficient as they can be."

Already working with *xwave* in a fulfillment capacity, Northwood engaged the company to conduct a Core Technology Review.

The Solution: *xwave*'s Core Technology Review

Offered through the company's Advanced Technology Solutions Consulting (ATSc) practice, the Core Technology Review involves two phases:

- 1) **The technology blueprint**—Following a thorough assessment of the client's business and operating environment, *xwave* provides a detailed design that covers all major components, takes into account future business needs, and meets industry standards such as ISO and ITIL (the IT Infrastructure Library)
- 2) **The implementation plan**—This is an execution plan for the phase-one blueprint, and includes key tasks and milestones; necessary resources, timelines and cost estimates; best practices for migration; and supporting documentation

"The goal of the Core Technology Review is to give an organization like Northwood a big-picture perspective of its IT and ultimately ensure it's making the right investments," says Steve Harris, Principal Consultant, ATSc, *xwave*.

In the case of a provincially-funded healthcare provider, those investments carry with them certain conditions that affect decision-making around IT.

In addition to facing a limit on the amount of capital funding allowed for expansion, Northwood must ensure that any new infrastructure—bricks and mortar or otherwise—can be supported by existing resources. That means that proposed IT must not only be managed by current staff; it must also make the staff more efficient to enable them to handle increased demands for service. In addition, projects must be proposed in a phased yet connected manner that coincides with the staggered availability of funds.

Working within these parameters, **xwave** conducted Northwood's Core Technology Review. The process involved a complete IT inventory; site visits; business interviews (with Northwood's Chief Financial Officer, for example, to better understand daily operations and business goals); external research (with technology vendors as well as analysts such as IDC and Gartner); and a vision session, in which **xwave** presented a long-term vision to Northwood, the feedback to which was incorporated into the blueprint report and implementation plan.

The 127-page blueprint report contained 151 recommendations covering the following areas:

- applications
- databases
- data centre / data rooms
- network operating system
- messaging
- wide area network
- local area network
- Internet
- servers
- storage
- end-users
- security
- IT service management

The follow-up implementation plan outlined nine projects that, over a three-year period, will see the blueprint recommendations put into action. Projects range from new Internet topology and a new firewall at the primary access site, to network upgrades (LAN, WLAN, VLAN), centralized server monitoring, and enterprise-wide backup.

The Outcome: a future-proof investment strategy and an implementation blueprint encompassing Active Directory and Exchange

For Northwood, the two most important deliverables from the Core Technology Review have been the implementation plans for new Microsoft® Exchange (email/messaging) and Active Directory (network

access/security) applications. Factors such as the need for broader Internet access, the use of wireless devices such as BlackBerrys, and the new VOIP phone system have brought with them the risk of potential vulnerabilities for Northwood that Jay MacIntyre is now better-equipped to manage.

"Our IT team now has concrete project plans for Active Directory and Exchange implementations," he says. "The new facility in West Bedford is the catalyst and launch point, but the applications are going to roll out enterprise-wide."

So far, he says, everything's on schedule for the ultimate go-live date of April 1st. **xwave**, meanwhile, continues to provide support for example, by facilitating quarterly project meetings.

"**xwave**'s service and expertise have been very good," says MacIntyre. "They knew exactly what they needed from me to get the job done, and they were thorough and to the point."

With the Core Technology Review, Northwood now has an IT roadmap that takes into account imminent growth, is financially feasible, and provides the technological groundwork for an environment that will help improve service.

About xwave ATS

xwave Advanced Technology Solutions (ATS) offers a complete portfolio of products, services and solutions that include best-practice procurement; technology and infrastructure planning; and consolidation and virtualization solutions that effectively support today's green IT strategies. Maintaining tier one partnerships with the industry's leading technology manufacturers and supported by a team of highly-specialized experts, ATS helps clients in both private and public sectors gain a measurable return on their technology investments while benefitting from a greener, more manageable and more stable IT environment.

Contact us

To learn more about how our ATS team helps clients innovate and solve business problems while growing, lowering costs and minimizing risk, contact us:

Online: www.xwave.com/ATS

By email: ATSinfo@xwave.com

By phone: 1-877-449-9283