



THE CUSTOMER

As the only Idaho-based, not-for-profit health system, St. Luke's is dedicated to the mission of improving the health of people in its communities. With locations throughout the state, St. Luke's focus is not only on treating patients, but also on creating a healthy community of people. With an overall goal to continually evolve to better meet patients' needs, improve outcomes, and lower costs, St. Luke's determined that one area that needed attention was the specimen courier operation.

THE SITUATION

St. Luke's internal specimen courier team consists of about 38 users: 23 couriers and 15 lab administrators and dispatch operators combined. St. Luke's has 10 routes to manage, which creates many stops each day and week. Regularly scheduled stops include hospitals, clinics, and outpatient draw sites, with the courier service assisting the pathology group to transport specimens and slides.

The specimen courier process was time consuming for couriers and administrators. As couriers made their way through daily routes, they manually recorded each visit to keep track of where, when, and what they picked up and delivered. Dispatch would review the daily route with each courier and call them if they needed to make changes throughout the day.

This method seems sufficient until a specimen is missing. "Lost specimens caused huge accountability issues for us," remarked Jordan Harris, Pathology Supervisor for St. Luke's Health. "We struggled to provide supporting documentation when a specimen did not arrive where it was supposed to be."

This situation caused credibility issues for his team where relationships and customer service are key. "The busier we got, the more we realized we needed a better solution," explained Harris.

THE CHALLENGE

There were a number of costly challenges couriers, administrators, and dispatchers faced with each day's workload. The first step in developing a better solution was to identify the costliest challenges:

- Tracking lost specimens
- Finding the most efficient daily route for couriers
- Accurately recording pickups and deliveries of specimens

These issues are not necessarily independent of one another; in fact, each of the issues affect the other. Moreover, these issues have the potential to negatively affect the customer service experience, especially without a consistent protocol in place. Part of St. Luke's mission is to do everything in its power to support a healthy community. This is made possible, in part, by focusing on ensuring quality service, providing advanced technology, and empowering its team with the right tools.



Lost Specimens

One of the biggest hurdles with this manual process was the ability (or lack thereof) to track specimens. This is troublesome from a customer service standpoint, but more important, lives could be at stake if pickup or drop-off didn't happen as promised. Tracking is particularly critical when time-sensitive specimens like bone marrow are being transported. Typically, bone marrow must be received by the lab within 8 hours of harvest. A lost specimen, in this case, could require that a second sample be harvested, which is inconvenient and uncomfortable for the patient. This takes up more time on everyone's part, and for some patients, time is something they can't afford to lose.



Recording Courier Stops

Every site is different for St. Luke's couriers. For example, some sites are mail pickups while others are both mail and specimens. Couriers will rarely just pick up one specimen and move on to the next. At most locations, couriers must manage batches of specimens with varying requirements, such as the need to be stored at room temperature or refrigerated. Handling multiple types of samples with varying storage requirements demands attention to detail. Using just a clipboard and handwritten notes to manage all this information made the job time-consuming and difficult to perform accurately. The paper-based process often slowed courier transport time and resulted in mistakes. Sometimes a courier would pick up a dozen samples but forget to log one of them on their chart, risking specimen accountability and impacting the quality of service.



Route Optimization

With a manual process, it's difficult to determine the optimal route. There are a number of considerations made each day, including priority stops, traffic conditions, and even unplanned stops that get added into the day's route plan. For couriers, knowing which route might be fastest on any given day can be a challenge. "Each morning couriers would have to map their route based on the orders of the day," said Harris. "And when a last-minute request for a pickup came through, it would force the courier to re-think their route," Harris added.

THE SOLUTION

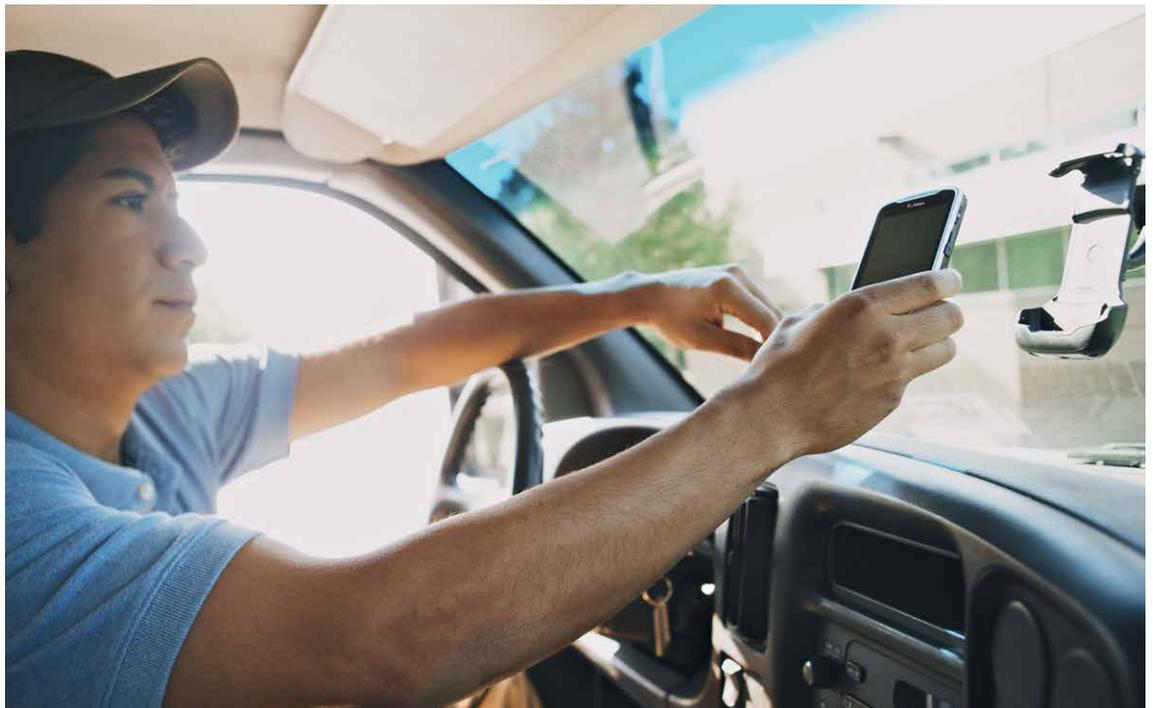
Taylor Data Systems examined St. Luke's plight and introduced the hospital to their Medical Courier Elite (MCE) cloud-based software solution. "It was clear these folks needed to automate the process in order to improve credibility with each of their clients," said Dave Taylor, owner of Taylor Data Systems.

Today, St. Luke's courier team uses the Zebra TC56 mobile computer, complete with the MCE app and cellular voice and data connectivity—no clipboards, no pens. MCE is designed to be intuitive, making training a snap. The TC56 is synchronized in real-time with all the pickup sites and routes for the day, so it is continually optimized for the most efficient drive time. The mobile device has a high-performance barcode scanner built-in, so when the courier arrives at the site, they simply scan each barcode on the hazmat bag and confirm the contents of each bag.

The courier team doesn't have to deal with accountability issues anymore, which was their biggest struggle. Today they can even type in notes and provide an information trail about each visit. Comments help document issues and drive continual improvement:

- No specimens available for pickup
- Supplies delivered
- Picked up mail
- Client was unhappy

"How do you prove where you were and what you picked up if there's no record of it?" said Harris. "With MCE we virtually eliminated the guesswork. It's clear based on the data in the system where the courier was at any given time. If there was an error in the reconciliation process at the time of the delivery, the system would alert the courier, so it was basically foolproof."



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- J. Harris, St. Luke's

THE RESULTS

Medical Courier Elite (MCE) allows St. Luke's to run a courier team more efficiently and economically than a manual process. Dispatch and administrative staff can operate from the MCE dashboard, enabling real-time visibility into courier location, what specimens have been picked up or dropped off, which routes are upcoming, and how long each collection stop takes.

The ability to optimize courier routes based on orders for the day saves time and alleviates stress on the courier. And when those last-minute pickups are requested, all the dispatcher needs to do is add the request to a route and the driver will be alerted of the change.

"We've dramatically increased the efficiency of our operation with MCE," remarked Harris. "We're continually improving because we can set certain goals and actually be able to track our progress. Today we're able to make better, informed decisions that allow us to provide outstanding service and support to each client."



Zebra TC56 Touch Computer

- Sleek, Smartphone-Style Design
- 4G/LTE Cellular Connectivity
- High-Performance Industrial Scanner
- Super Rugged Exterior
- Corning® Gorilla® Glass Touch Screen

THE KEY BENEFITS OF USING MEDICAL COURIER ELITE

- Courier schedules and routes can be created based on the unique needs of your clients.
- Direct access to specimen information allows couriers to quickly answer questions.
- Delivery verification ensures positive proof of delivery.
- Dispatch enables courier to efficiently handle time-sensitive pickups.
- Automated solution improves response time and overall customer service, as well as courier accountability and productivity.
- Virtually eliminates instances of lost or misplaced specimens.

Discover how you can improve the specimen collection and delivery operation in your facility. Contact us today and see how MCE can help you meet those goals.



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