

# An ophthalmology practice unlocks higher value from its EMRs and call center

Hosted Voice saves \$40,000 a year, increases patient satisfaction and accelerates cash flow

## Client profile

Tomoka Eye Associates is a thriving ophthalmology practice with three offices and its own surgery center along the Florida coast. Most of the practice's 100,000 patients are seniors. Tomoka's call center is a major asset, connecting patients with live operators who answer questions and can even begin over-the-phone triage for patients with eye problems. From the call center, to Electronic Medical Records (EMR) software that accelerates doctors' ability to make treatment decisions, responsiveness sets Tomoka apart—and ahead, with its patient base growing steadily despite intense competition.

*“Our call center needs to stay accessible and responsive, and EMR access must be fast, reliable and secure. We get everything we need to create this superior patient experience with fiber optics and Hosted Voice from Spectrum Enterprise.”*

– Bill Watson

## Challenges

Slow access to electronic patient records bottlenecked patient treatment and billing. EMRs help medical practices accelerate treatment, avoid duplicate procedures and ensure quality care and timely reimbursement. In 2014, a federal mandate to implement EMRs, along with the promise of using EMRs to benefit both patients and doctors, prompted Tomoka Eye Associates to make a significant investment in software to digitize, manage and deliver medical records.

Unfortunately, the copper T1 lines connecting Tomoka's offices to each other and the Internet couldn't handle these large files. Software buffering frustrated the ophthalmologists as they tried to enter patient notes and review previous visits. Billing slowed, too, as staff waited for screens to display data needed to file for reimbursement. Tomoka CEO Bill Watson needed a way to speed things up.



Bill Watson, CEO  
Client since 2016

## Client profile



## Company

Tomoka Eye Associates

## Industry

Healthcare

## Services

Hosted Voice  
Fiber Internet Access  
Ethernet Private LAN  
Fiber Connect TV for Healthcare

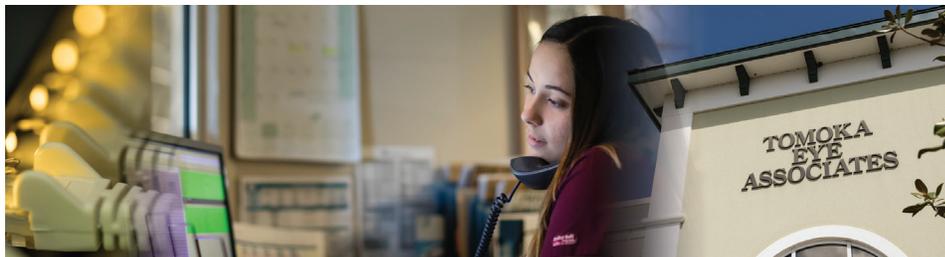
*“Call center staff now handle 7,000 to 8,000 calls a month with superior service that helps the 100,000-patient practice see the number of visits grow 5-7% per year despite intense competition.”*

Unreliable hosted VoIP service kept patients from reaching the call center. The practice’s call center, previously a competitive asset, was threatening to become a liability: When patients couldn’t reach the live operators, calls rolled over to an automated answering service that left them waiting hours, even days, for a call back. With up to 8,000 calls coming in each month, even brief outages had a profound impact on the satisfaction—and care—of patients calling with everything from billing questions and contact lens refills to eye emergencies. Watson needed a solution for these frequent VoIP outages.

Resolving even simple IT issues took days. Tamara Tomassini, Tomoka’s Patient Support Manager and Palm Coast Office Manager, recalls that with the previous hosted voice provider, “even something as simple as changing a name on a phone took a week.” Watson adds that the long wait for the provider to fix problems was

*“Overhead is a big issue for medical practices. We’re now saving about \$40,000 a year just with the Hosted Voice portion of our Spectrum Enterprise solution.”*

– Bill Watson



compounded by how hard it was for Tomoka to report troubles in the first place: “The provider wasn’t local,” he says. “We had no rep to call.”

Outdated call center management tools undercut the excellence of the staff. Operators couldn’t manage—or even see—calls waiting in queues. Plus, although the previous solution included call recording, there was no mechanism for finding those calls later. When a patient phoned with a billing question, it often took days to retrieve the call manually and forward it to the billing team. It was equally difficult to retrieve specific types of calls for training sessions.

### Solutions

**Accelerating productivity across the Tomoka enterprise.** The EMR bottleneck prompted Watson to replace T1s with fiber optics, and Tomoka Eye Associates chose Spectrum Enterprise as its new provider. The account team provided guidance on how to bring out the value of the EMR software by using fiber connectivity to improve patient care and administrative functions across Tomoka’s three-locations. The initial solution included an Ethernet Private LAN (EP-LAN) that uses Metro Ethernet to link all offices with each other and with the 50 Mbps Fiber Internet Access (FIA) circuit at Tomoka’s main office. This accelerates the performance of the EMR software and other applications shared across the enterprise.

**Creating patient-centric offices.** Ophthalmology exams typically include administering drops that take 20 minutes to dilate patients’ eyes. To help them relax and pass the time, Tomoka installed Spectrum Enterprise Fiber Connect TV for Healthcare service in all reception areas. Because the video service operates on a separate connection, it doesn’t affect the connectivity for Tomoka’s data communications.

**Empowering call center staff to raise responsiveness.** When the Spectrum Enterprise team added Hosted Voice to Tomoka’s solution, Watson’s IT and call center managers were impressed with how the advanced, cloud-based private voice network operates on its own fiber circuit. Like the separate TV circuit, this means the EMR software and other applications deliver top performance, even with hundreds of calls a day coming into the call center.

Watson also appreciated the turnkey completeness of Hosted Voice. This one solution provides network and transport equipment, plus features such as the Unity Desktop. This live dashboard lets call center staff view queued calls in real-time so they can get to patients quickly, even during high-volume periods.

## Results

A “night and day” difference in EMR performance. With fiber, Watson says the investment in EMR software finally began to pay off. The fiber unlocked the full value Tomoka had originally anticipated: faster billing, better use of doctors’ time with patients and higher-quality care for patients themselves. In 2017, with the practice continuing to add patients and cloud-based shared apps, Watson further upgraded the practice’s FIA solution to 50 Mbps.

A steep reduction in call center costs. While the call center is a competitive asset, it’s also a cost center. The \$40,000 a year saved with Hosted Voice service is a double win: improving patient experience and Tomoka’s bottom line. In fact, Watson adds, “Hosted Voice gave our people the tools to be so much more to patients than call center reps. For this reason, we renamed the call center the ‘Patient Support Center.’”

Higher satisfaction for patients, physicians and staff. Doctors can quickly check patient EMRs and add notes so they can spend more time engaging with patients. The billing staff is delighted with the EMR software’s new performance and its impact on cashflow. Instead of taking an hour, it now takes minutes to pull up a file and determine billing reimbursement codes. Plus, issues get resolved in minutes versus days. For

*“Callers’ medical and billing issues are now resolved in minutes vs. days, thanks to Hosted Voice call center tools.”*



With FIA and EP-LAN solutions from Spectrum Enterprise, Tomoka professionals can quickly check patient EMRs and add notes so they can spend more time engaging with patients.

instance, Watson explains, the ability to record and search for specific calls means Patient Support Center reps can “go in, grab a recorded call instantly, and tell our staff, ‘I’ve got a patient with a problem. I’m going to email you the call.’”

Tomassini says the reliability of Hosted Voice means “the Patient Support Center phones have not gone down. That level of responsiveness is essential to maintaining the quality of care we provide. It really sets us apart.” Hosted Voice also responds to internal needs. Tomassini recalls how, “if we were to close 30 minutes early... it would require a 30-minute call” to the old provider to make that happen. “Now, I log into the admin portal, click, and it’s done!”

**Staying agile in a changing field.** Watson must make decisions today that continue to deliver value as technology, demographics, reimbursement and ophthalmology continue to change. From adding offices to exploring ways to do more with existing Hosted Voice features,

Watson says he relies on local support from Spectrum Enterprise for the metrics, insights and expertise to help him make the right decisions for patients, doctors and the future of the practice itself.

### About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, is a national provider of scalable, fiber-based technology solutions serving many of America’s largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions, including Internet access, Ethernet and Managed Network Services, Voice and TV solutions, Managed Application, Cloud Infrastructure and Managed Hosting Services. Our industry-leading team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit [enterprise.spectrum.com](http://enterprise.spectrum.com).

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