Hospitals and critical care facilities cannot afford to have technical issues. Often, hospitals run on a tight budget and in an effort to save money perform many technical tasks in-house. When an issue surfaces that requires immediate attention, any downtime is critical to the care of both the facility and the patients. Downtime can be directly related to loss of revenue and in a medical setting, it can also translate into an inability to meet the needs of patients and staff.

ACS is the Trusted Technology Advisor for a medical facility that provides both inpatient and outpatient services to surrounding counties. This hospital has 3 internal IT personnel and operates on Cisco switches and routers. Initially, ACS set up the system wide wireless network. Though the option of Peace of Mind, Managed Services was presented to the client for a small fee of $300 per month the client determined it was not the right time for them to pursue a Managed Services offering.

ACS Peace of Mind, Managed Services provides monitoring and updates in several areas, including:

- Firmware
- Software
- Operating systems
As time passed, the hospital’s network began to experience issues. Overall coverage was failing intermittently, eventually spreading to the entire network. Their internal IT staff contacted ACS for assessment and remediation. The assessment identified the cause was a wireless controller. The assessment also uncovered their firmware was several versions out of date. The hospital felt they could remediate the issue themselves with assistance from the manufacturer, Cisco. Therefore they attempted to contact Cisco directly for assistance; Cisco refused service citing the system’s firmware was out of date. They were instructed to call back once the firmware had been upgraded to the current version.

“If your firmware is not up-to-date, the hardware vendor will not support you. This is not limited to just Cisco; this is now the industry standard.” says Tim Moore, Director of Managed Services at ACS.

AFTER CISCO REFUSED SERVICE, THE COMPANY WAS PROVIDED WITH TWO OPTIONS:

1. ACS could update the firmware for a fee. The estimated downtime was two hours.
   - In regard to the overall issues, downtime was anticipated for a total of four hours to remediate both the wireless issues and the outdated firmware.

2. The company could update the LAN controller’s firmware themselves.

Ultimately, the company chose to update the firmware on their own. On the surface, updates may seem like a simple endeavor. However, due to the variety of versions and limitless configurations it is easy to miss a small detail which can impact the entire system. Unfortunately, for this hospital the IT staff missed a crucial step when updating the wireless controller and core switch causing the phone system to fail both within the hospital and their clinics. Again they called Cisco for help and were refused due to operating out-of-date firmware. Upon Cisco’s second refusal to render service, ACS was brought in to fix the failed phone system and properly perform the firmware update.

ACS was able to resolve both the firmware and phone system issues; however, the final downtime for the hospital was over 60 hours. The overall cost to the medical facility was over $8,000, nearly four times the initial estimated cost for ACS’ Peace of Mind, Managed Services.

Preventative services like ACS’ Peace of Mind, Serenity, and Disaster Recovery solutions are imperative. This hospital experienced first-hand the cost of falling behind on routine maintenance. With the money spent remediating this situation, the company could have paid for over two years’ worth of Managed Services from ACS and avoided over a week of downtime, lost wages, lost revenue, and overall diminished staff productivity.

“It’s like taking care of your health. Would you rather pay a Dr. for routine health checkups, or pay an ER bill once you’ve had a heart attack” says Denny Fisher, Sr. Consultant of Risk Management at ACS.

As a Managed Services provider, ACS’ job is to stay on top of critical needs. In this scenario, a monthly purchase of $300 Managed Services with minimum downtime to update the firmware could have prevented this nearly debilitating disaster.