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## A Conversation with...Jeff Timbrook

Tracking imaging's trends

By Jeff Timbrook

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Jeff Timbrook, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Acuo Technologies ([www.acuotech.com](http://www.acuotech.com)), discusses storage and infrastructure trends that affect today's hospital departments due to advanced medical imaging technology.

RT Image: What key challenges does the medical imaging industry face now or in the near future?

Jeff Timbrook: The explosion of medical image data is affecting all healthcare providers in providing appropriate infrastructures to store and distribute this information.

Healthcare information technology (IT) departments must insist that their digital imaging vendors maintain the image data in standards-based formats so that the data can be agile, accessible and portable from this generation of storage platforms to the next.

The evolution of PACS and digital imaging has taken the industry from an analog environment to digital to grid computing environments today.

As well, via acquisitions and organic imaging growth, healthcare provider enterprises have become more distributed and complex, so the need for grid computing environments has become crucial to assist IT departments to manage this growth.

Once healthcare organizations become filmless, uptime of digital imaging systems is crucial for patient care and throughput, so the need for high availability and data replication is a must.

RT: You mentioned image volume management as a top concern. How is Acuo helping to address this issue?

Timbrook: Acuo Technologies has engineered a software solution that enables a robust, standards-based infrastructure for all medical imaging assets.

Our software capabilities provides a "Google" environment for accessing the complete medical imaging record, through a distributed DICOM service grid, thus accessing the data at the point where images are most likely to be recalled. We have engineered our solution to eliminate the waste, poor interoperability and single points of failure of legacy PACSs.

RT: As healthcare IT advances at a record-setting pace, how can hospitals and imaging centers ensure their storage networks won't become obsolete?

Timbrook: It's important to preserve a hospital or imaging center's existing investment, and allow for growth and sharing information between vendors. Realistically, every system will someday be moved from an existing storage hardware platform to one that is newer and more cost effective.

At Acuo, we designed our solution to preserve current hardware investments by virtualizing existing PACS and storage systems, allowing our customers to take advantage of the next step in technology, and providing a migration path by maintaining the data in industry-standard format.

Acuo also provides an embedded tool to migrate the data when desired. Acuo is developing software that strictly adheres to our industry's standards of DICOM, IHE and HL7, guaranteeing that our customers

always have access to innovation. All new innovations are being built on standard-based protocols and application programming interfaces.

RT: How can small imaging centers take advantage of archiving technology without investing millions of dollars?

Timbrook: Healthcare imaging and IT departments must demand scalable solutions that can operate from a laptop to the most complex and sophisticated Wintel clustered server environment.

Acuo's software lowers the total cost of ownership by offering a solution that is hardware agnostic and will always allow our customers to take advantage of the latest, higher performing, less costly hardware.

Acuo offers solutions that scale centrally as well as being delivered in a distributed fashion, creating a DICOM services grid which can be adapted naturally to the multi-site workflow that imaging centers require.

RT: Can you tell me why Acuo believes in a "best of breed" philosophy and what that means?

Timbrook: Acuo subscribes to a best-of-breed philosophy that creates advantages for our customers such as flexibility, interoperability and scalability. Pleasing every "ology" with the viewing technology is virtually impossible.

Acuo provides a foundation that can be utilized by individual departments and gives doctors and caregivers freedom of choice of diagnostic desktops, and the IT department enterprise control of the data.

RT: What are the advantages to centralized management for administration?

Timbrook: Centralized management increases efficiency and ease of use for physicians. We refer to our solution suite as a DICOM services grid – any medical image device or PACS can dynamically join the grid by simply supporting DICOM communications protocols. We offer centralized management tools built on Web services that can administer and manage the entire grid.

For imaging centers or hospitals with multiple sites, this means a patient who has procedures performed at one facility can be seen on the RIS and PACS databases as a single entry with a single, consolidated patient folder when viewed from other locations.

The complexity of the network and the software that operates it is invisible to the user, while the effect for the administrators is efficiency. Software installation, operational modifications and monitoring of image access is centralized, and can be accessed from any location.

Because an IHE-compliant audit log is transmitted with each image, it is simple to review each change that has been made with an image.

— RT Image

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