



Mind the Gaps!

Internal Auditors Help Secure Information

Few products are as critical to our well-being as pharmaceuticals, and few mistakes are as costly as prescribing an incorrect medication or dosage. With 60 percent of American adults taking three or more medications every day and a third of American adults taking five or more medications every day, opportunities for potentially life-threatening errors abound. Parata Systems manufactures products that automatically dispense and label medications, helping prevent mistakes in the pharmacy and improving patient adherence to the drug regimens prescribed by their doctors.

Because Parata's customers depend on them for increased safety and security, quality and accountability have always been part of the company culture. Recently, though, Parata took its existing assessment program a step further, by developing its own team of internal quality auditors.

Team Improvement

It started with a common interest in improvement; several Parata employees signed up for the same auditing class, taught by NC State Industry Expansion Solutions Improvement Specialist Barbara Williams. When Williams saw that the roster was full of Parata employees, she proposed a separate auditor training session solely for Parata employees, allowing them to focus specifically on their company's unique circumstances.

"We met with her more than once before we even started," says Quality Manager Tracy Parks. "She was very good at digging in up front—asking questions about Parata so that she understood our needs."

Parata Systems Challenge

Parata's internal auditors all had vastly different auditing experience, ranging from automotive to health care. The plant's quality manager wanted to ensure that the internal auditing process was consistent across the board.

IES Solution

Internal Auditor Training (on-site)

Benefits

IES training illuminated opportunities to improve new employee training in the area of HIPAA compliance and ensure that patient medical data remained highly protected.

Moving the auditor training in-house allowed Parata to pull together a team of people from different areas of the company. Most of these employees already had some level of auditor training, but they had come from vastly different backgrounds—some from automotive, some from contract manufacturing—and consequently they each had a different understanding of what auditing was and how it should be done.

The training helped the whole cross-functional team get on the same page, so they could move forward in the most effective way possible.

“That was our intent, more than anything else,” says Dave Henderson, the manufacturing operations manager. “Getting the whole corporation to look at assessments and audits the same way, and be consistent in what we did.”

One of the first audits that the team attacked was one of their most important: HIPAA compliance.

“Our machines are used in the field and then come back to be refurbished,” explains Keith Majeroni, Parata’s facilities and safety manager. “They have the potential to have protected health information on them. This process helped us see where we could better ensure that

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—Tracy Parks, Quality Manager
Parata Systems

personal health information was immediately removed from the machines and destroyed according to established procedures.”

“We’re able to be proactive rather than reactive,” Parks adds.

The team also uncovered some gaps in the way that new employees were being trained in regards to HIPAA’s procedures for handling information.

“People didn’t always know what we thought they knew,” says Parks. “So we went back and made videos and did a better job.”

Because its products have proven to offer additional safety and security to its customers, Parata is growing; its revenues over the last 13 years have come mostly from independent pharmacies, but its products have also been adopted by long-term care facilities and hospitals in recent years. The new team of internal auditors is an added assurance that Parata will contrive to deliver on quality, now and into the future.

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