# How Vonage Business Communications Can Empower Your Medical Staff

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# Introduction

Small medical practices often face formidable challenges when it comes to staffing and managing their front desk operations. With limited staff, optimizing productivity and engaging patients is a difficult balance to find.

If you run a small practice, you already know the scope of the problem. But to add a little data to the experience, consider that a **2023 Medical Group Management Association poll** found that staffing ranked as the top burden for medical practices, and a 2024 study published in the **Journal of the American Medical Association Health Forum** found a "substantial and persistent" increase in healthcare workers leaving the industry since the pandemic.

Clinicians and staff were stretched thin before the pandemic, and things haven't gotten much better. These workforce challenges aren't going away anytime soon, either, especially with a rapidly aging population needing more care more often. Today, small practices often find themselves having to do more with less, and they need affordable solutions that can help enhance patient interactions, streamline communications, and enhance productivity all at once to ease that burden.

# Cloud-Based UCaaS Designed for Small Practices

Vonage Business Communications (VBC) can provide these solutions. The cloud-based **Unified Communications as a Service** (UCaaS) platform was designed with small healthcare practices in mind.

By transitioning more functions to the cloud, VBC's unified communications can help even the smallest practice enhance staff productivity with cloud-based solutions that integrate with electronic health record (EHR) software, reducing the need for on-premises infrastructure and maintenance. This shift can cut down overhead costs and alleviate the common technology-related headaches many small practices face.

In short, this technology can help your small practice deliver an excellent provider and patient experience.

## Phone Only? No Problem

In many smaller medical practices, voice communication is still the primary channel of communication. This is especially true for practices serving older patients. That doesn't have to be a problem, though.

VBC offers features built for healthcare practices that are powered by SpinSci, a Vonage healthcare partner. SpinSci's Patient Assist feature can improve front desk operations and streamline patient interactions by pulling real-time information from the patient's EHR. This provides a comprehensive view on a single screen that enables the following:

- **Immediate patient identification.** When a patient calls, the system identifies them and supports secure patient identity verification. For instance, the staff can confirm the patient's identity by checking their date of birth or the last four digits of their Social Security number, both of which appear on the screen.

- **Real-time access to patient information.** A team member has access to critical patient data as soon as they take (or make) the call. These details, such as the patient's preferred name, local pharmacy, medical history, referrals, and even family members, are readily available. The staff member can then address the patient by name and provide personalized, informed answers. Moreover, patients don't want to keep having to explain their symptoms or their medical history over and over (and over) again. With Patient Assist, they don't have to.

- **Enhanced appointment management.** Since team members can easily see each patient's appointments and no-show history at a glance, they can more efficiently manage scheduling. They can make, change, or update appointments accordingly, which can potentially reduce no-show rates.

- **Better billing and collections**. During a call, the team can see whether the patient has any outstanding balances. This gives them the opportunity to remind patients about unpaid bills. It's not the easiest conversation to have, but it's necessary.

- **Ability to share images**. The integration of a software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) with VBC ensures effective broadband connection management. This feature is important for bandwidth-intensive tasks, such as transferring large medical images while maintaining the quality of the call. The last thing you want is to have a call drop just as you're explaining a diagnosis or treatment.

**The platform also supports outgoing calls with a click-to-call integration that lets practices call from within their EHR systems. It also supports shifting from a call to a video visit.**

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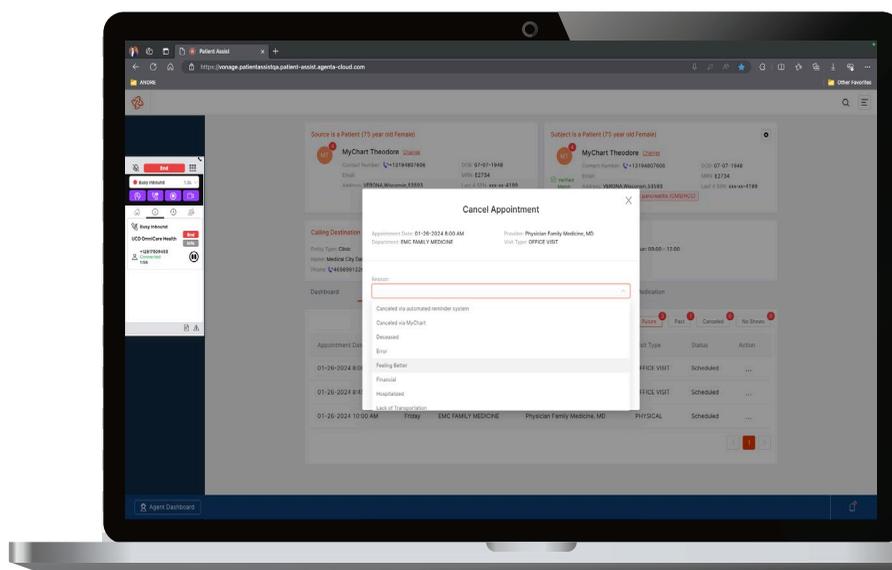
# When Phone Calls Become Video Visits

Vonage Meetings, VBC's built-in video conferencing solution, is accessible from the VBC desktop or mobile app.  It's easy to send a meeting link for a video consultation with Vonage Meetings via VBC.  Practices can avoid the unnecessary back-and-forth of scheduling another call or visit, while patients receive an immediate response to a nagging issue.  This can provide peace of mind for a patient who has an issue that needs to be assessed by a doctor visually.

Moreover, this ability to quickly transition from voice to video can generate additional revenue by turning a short call into an actual consult. As with the voice connection, these video consults are high quality and **fully HIPAA-compliant**. But for this to happen, calls need to go to the right person.

# Flexible Call Routing and Management

With VBC, practices can easily manage and route incoming calls. This could mean directing all appointment rescheduling calls to a specific staff member — who could be working from anywhere. Or, it could mean  intelligently directing calls to the next available person in a set group of extensions, either in a specific order or simultaneously.

This smart routing ensures the right team member answers the call promptly and can respond with the appropriate information. It delivers consistency in patient communication and improves the overall patient experience by helping patients quickly reach the right person, regardless of individual availability.

VBC also offers a shared-line feature, providing a common phone number for a group, such as a team within a healthcare practice. When a team member returns a patient call, the patient's phone shows the group number instead of the individual's number.



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# Every Space Can Be an Office

With VBC, providers can have access to the system via their laptops or mobile devices, no matter where they are, ensuring continuity of care for patients at all times. This flexibility supports practices in:

- **Going remote.** VBC allows a practice to keep running even if no one can get to the office. For example, if extreme weather events, fires, burst pipes, or electrical outages make the medical office inaccessible, VBC ensures patients don't miss a beat. The cloud-based technology enables providers and their teams to access necessary tools from any location, ensuring excellent patient care isn't disrupted by physical barriers.

- **Managing multiple small offices.** Some small practices operate from multiple locations. They may be open on Mondays and Fridays in one town and Tuesdays and Thursdays in the next town over. Regardless, VBC ensures everyone has the same access to the care they need.

- **Facilitating scalable growth.** The system's requirement of just an internet connection simplifies the setup process for new locations. Practices can quickly begin operations and communicate with patients, and as practices grow, VBC's scalability ensures adapting to evolving needs is possible with ease. In addition, growing practices can integrate the system with contact centers (CC) — Vonage, through its partnership with SpinSci, is one of the few providers that offers both CC and unified communications fully integrated into the EHR system.

Because VBC's interactions are secure over any Wi-Fi connection, providers can work from anywhere, including their home office or a hotel during a conference.
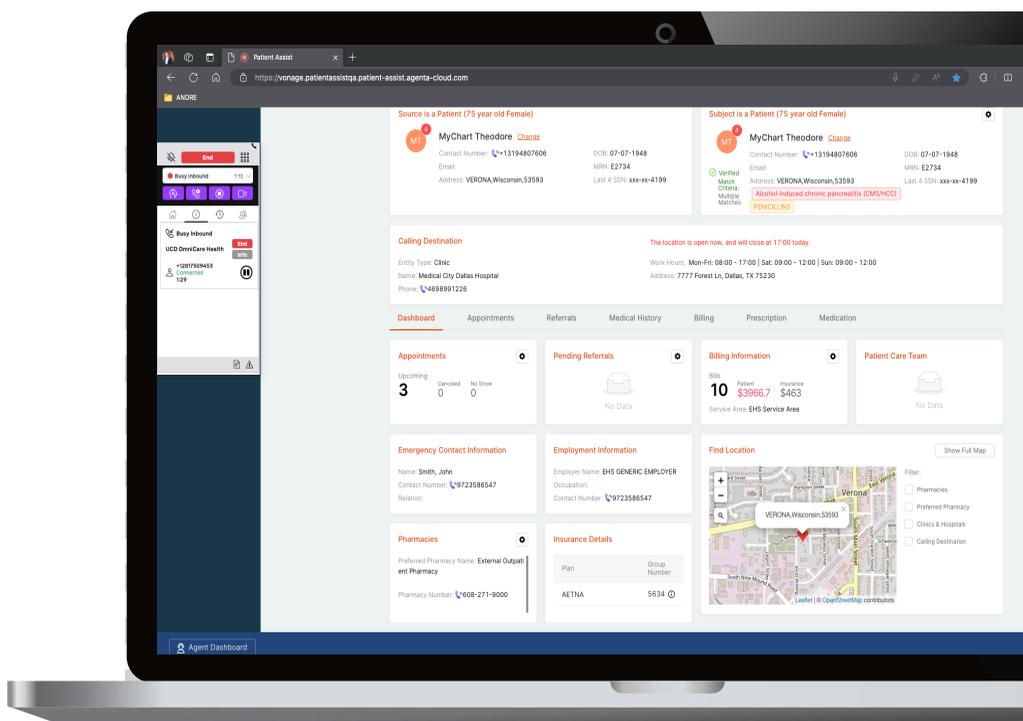
# SMS Alerts: Because Everyone Forgets Something

Patient Notify can help increase payments and decrease no-shows by nudging patients in the right direction. This feature, which is enabled by SpinSci, acts as a virtual assistant for both patients and practices, seamlessly integrating with EHR and scheduling software.

It sends timely, actionable notifications triggered by events in the EHR software, including reminders about appointments and bill payments. These reminders can be sent via voice, text, or email, depending on a patient's preference. And they work: According to SpinSci, a Midwestern health system saw a 51% decrease in patient no-shows using Patient Notify. And because it dynamically updates to reflect any changes in the schedule, the provider's calendar is always current.

> **Tip: To use this feature, practices must have a HIPAA-compliant SMS. Don't worry: A Vonage expert can help guide you through the process.**



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## This Matters to Your Practice — Here's Why

These tools can help small medical practices thrive. VBC's suite of reliable, fully customizable, and user-friendly communication solutions can help you:

- **Enrich patient experiences** by providing a more personal connection with patients, minimizing wait times and redundant questions.

- **Enhance provider experiences** by seamlessly connecting with existing EHRs to centralize patient information, consent, and communications in the cloud that are accessible to doctors, nurses, and staff anytime, anywhere.

- **Increase front-office efficiency** by instantly identifying patient phone numbers upon call receipt and displaying crucial information, such as appointment history, billing, prescriptions, and more.

- **Scale across sites** by effortlessly implementing VBC across multiple locations to support connected and streamlined communication platforms. This helps expedite expansion, and it can be a lifesaver when an emergency closes your primary — or only — office.

- **Maximize cost efficiency** by reducing hardware and operational expenses while simultaneously boosting efficiency and scalability.

- **Gain a competitive edge** by moving patient communications to the cloud and integrating them with your EHR system. Small practices typically don't have access to this level of integration and sophistication; EHRs are required to be cloud-based, but most small practices don't have cloud based communications. Making this move can align you with current healthcare technology trends and set you apart from practices with traditional, non-digital practices.

VBC offers more than just a communication solution; it's a strategic tool for addressing immediate operational challenges while paving the way for sustainable growth.

# Getting Started

**Contact us** to discover how VBC can transform your practice today.
1-888-335-7314