

## Software Supply for the Long-Term Care Industry



Steve Mackie - CEO

**CEOCFO: Mr. Mackie, what is the concept at Optima Healthcare Solutions?**

**Mr. Mackie:** At Optima, we supply software to the long-term care industry, specifically for the therapy department, which includes physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. We also cross over into assisted living and rehab clinics, as well as home health.

**CEOCFO: What do you understand on a fundamental level about working with this group or in this industry that perhaps others do not?**

**Mr. Mackie:** Because we work in an industry where the patient or resident is typically elderly and in a state of declining health, we have the opportunity to work with professionals who, on a daily basis, seek to restore patients to an equal or better level. Fundamentally, we understand that it is our job to make this process as easy and patient-focused as possible. We find it extremely rewarding to supply the software that allows those professionals to track progress for these elderly patients.

**CEOCFO: What is different about your software?**

**Mr. Mackie:** We really try to provide quality software. The long-term care industry in particular is highly regulated by the federal government because we are dealing with a population that is frail and elderly in many cases. We take these highly complicated regulations and laws and try to make them very simple as it comes to the documentation from a clinical perspective, as well as from a financial perspective.

**CEOCFO: How were you able to accomplish the user friendliness that seems so often to be lacking?**

**Mr. Mackie:** We have been doing this for 20+ years, so it has been a lot of trial and error. We have a director of user experience on staff, so we spend a lot of time talking with our customers and innovating around design that makes sense for their business and allows them to be very efficient. Here at Optima, we put a premium on allowing users to treat the patient and spend less time with the computer; we are constantly striving for this and rewarding our employees when we are able to create a user experience that allows us to reach that goal.

**CEOCFO: Would you give us an example?**

**Mr. Mackie:** Probably the greatest example right now is something we recently introduced called Rehab Optima 5. Rehab Optima 5 is our mobile solution, which allows therapists to complete their documentation at the point of treatment. Historically, what therapists have had to do in our particular sector is treat the patient while taking manual notes, and then after they treat a number of patients they have to go back to the computer and transcribe those notes into the software. What we have done is taken that process and made it mobile, which saves time and increases efficiency. This technology is also device agnostic, which means therapists can use Rehab Optima 5 on any device they choose. It also functions in a disconnected state, meaning that the therapist does not have to be connected to a wireless network. This is particularly important in nursing homes, especially ones that are a bit older where the walls are very thick and it is difficult to get Wi-Fi to every nook and cranny of the facility. This innovation allows the therapist direct access to the software at the point of care so they do not have to re-transcribe. It makes them more efficient, and more importantly, it makes the treatment to the patient more personalized and effective.

**CEOCFO: Are there many companies that specialize in the arena that Optima covers?**

**Mr. Mackie:** It is a very narrow niche; there are about three companies that specialize in our arena with two companies really holding the majority of customers in our space.

**CEOCFO: Does the therapeutic community realize the need for specialized software?**

**Mr. Mackie:** Up until about two years ago, our sales force was still converting customers from actual paper systems. However, some of the new electronic health record laws that have been enacted recently have forced the industry to incorporate electronic documentation so that the patient and facility both have an electronic health record available.

**CEOCFO: Would you tell us about the metrics portion of what you are able to provide?**

**Mr. Mackie:** From a financial perspective, therapy companies run their businesses around productivity and efficiency, meaning how much time they need to spend with the patient in order to restore them to an equal or higher level of function. One of the metrics we are able to provide around this is how productive a particular patient encounter was, and we do that through evaluating how efficient the measure of the minute was; therapy treatments are typically tracked based on minutes, so we are able to tie outcomes to those minutes using short and long-term goals. This notion of outcomes has come from recent federal regulations, and is used to determine effectiveness of treatment – you look at a baseline of where the patient was upon initial admission and then you measure that over time to see what outcomes were produced. We believe this metric is going to be very important in the future, especially as the federal government moves to more of a pay-for-performance reimbursement model. At Optima, we are leading the way by providing the functionality that allows therapists to accurately assess, measure and track different outcomes.

**CEOCFO: Is your client not necessarily an institution, but an outside therapy group that provides services?**

**Mr. Mackie:** We actually have both; we refer to the two different types as either an in-house therapy program or a contract therapy company, meaning you offer therapy at your facility or you have contracted therapy services out to an organization that specializes in that area. We feel that the long-term care market, particularly in the skilled nursing facility setting, is made up of about 70% contract therapy companies and 30% in-house therapy programs.

**“At Optima, our goal is to help our customers take control of their business, so they can help patients take control of their lives. We are passionate about that, and we really do want to see patients’ lives improve.” - Steve Mackie**

**CEOCFO: How do you reach prospective clients?**

**Mr. Mackie:** Our industry is a very relational industry, so we reach customers by creating relationships and then building on those relationships. This is typically done via trade shows, and we are very active in both the state and national trade shows for long-term care associations. While at the shows, we have the opportunity to spend time with both current and prospective clients, learn about their needs and see how we can help. We find that this model really fits our corporate personality because we are relational as a company, and like to think that we are creating partners rather than just clients.

Our website is also an important tool we use in reaching prospective clients. In the last year, we have put a lot of effort into becoming a thought leader in our space by providing helpful, informative content, and many users visit our site to consume and share that content.

**CEOCFO: Optima has been recognized as one of the best companies to work for in Florida. Why?**

**Mr. Mackie:** We build the company around three basic principles. We want to create great software, which is easy to say and hard to do. We want to create a great customer experience, which is also easy to say and hard to do. The third thing, and one that is just a blast for me is that we want to create a great place to work. My partners and I spend a lot of time thinking about how we can make Optima a great place to work because it is so important is to attract talent – whether it be a programmer, a product owner or a support technician. Because our industry is so complicated, when we hire an employee it is important to retain that employee. We do that through innovative things like free lunches and kitchens that are stocked with anything the employee wants. We also have a licensed massage therapist on staff; you can imagine that when employees are under a regulatory deadline, and we typically do not have a lot of lead time from the federal government to deploy new regulatory functionality, there is quite a bit of stress. The massage therapist is there to help our employees loosen up and live a more healthy life. We also give memberships to a gym that is in our business complex, so we are constantly thinking of ways we can create a very comfortable, professional environment for our employees.

**CEOCFO: Did you understand that concept day one or did it develop over time?**

**Mr. Mackie:** I do believe that it developed over time, as I matured as a CEO. Other CEOs that I respect and admire have always encouraged me to keep it simple in business and I've really tried to maintain that, which is why we only organize around those three basic principles. Regarding attracting and retaining talent, you realize that the investment you make in an individual by hiring them as an employee is substantial. You have to learn how to care for that employee in ways that are going to contribute to serving your customers and meeting your business goals.

**CEOFO: *Do you need to keep on top of trends in rehabilitation therapy?***

**Mr. Mackie:** Yes, it is extremely important. We have all three of the disciplines that we support in the industry on staff, including physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy clinicians. We think it is very important that they educate our entire company regarding best practices from a clinical and industry perspective. They are also at the forefront of what clinical and regulatory trends are developing, which helps us better understand potential needs and challenges of our customers. We feel that having this understanding helps us anticipate how we are going to provide a great customer experience.

Another key area for us is that we offer our software free to universities, so that they can introduce their students to electronic software. Working with these universities is another great way that our clinicians learn new techniques and ways of delivering therapy.

**CEOFO: *What is next? What might be different a year from now at Optima?***

**Mr. Mackie:** I think the biggest thing for us is an international push. We have been very focused on the United States, and we will continue to remain very focused on the United States, but we are seeing an emerging trend in the international market aligned around wellness. Some countries like China or India are struggling with an aging population, specifically how to bring care to that population. We see an avenue to be able to partner with groups in those specific nations around the concept of keeping people well and allowing them to remain in their home as long as possible. We recently delivered software to our first wellness center in the Guangzhou region of China, which is something we're really excited about. We think this is going to be a great opportunity for us to find additional ways to put the patient first.

**CEOFO: *Why choose Optima Healthcare Solutions?***

**Mr. Mackie:** Passion. We are passionate about what we do. At Optima, our goal is to help our customers take control of their business, so they can help patients take control of their lives. We are passionate about that, and we really do want to see patients' lives improve. Even though we want to make a profit, it is nice to know that at the end of what we do, a therapist is helping a patient get better. That is why I would say to choose Optima.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOFO Magazine

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## **Optima Healthcare Solutions**

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