Founded in 1969, Acadiana Computer Systems, Inc. (ACS), is a Louisiana-based company that provides billing/practice management services, practice management software, and health care consulting services to more than 2,000 physician practices and other health care entities.

**Challenges**
Initially, ACS in-house programmers maintained and developed its proprietary practice management software. As ACS’ radiology business expanded throughout Louisiana and into Missouri and Texas, the volume of documents required for coding also increased. Over the years, ACS grew at a steady pace, but as executives began to project massive radiology client growth in the mid-2000s, it became apparent that new technology would be critical to help them achieve their business goals.

ACS coded directly from clinical records, a labor intensive process. The company needed a solution that would help coders be more productive while maintaining and improving accuracy and compliance. As the company continued to take on new business, the management team sought more visibility into the overall coding process.

**Solutions**
In 2006, ACS began to look for a solution that would enable its business to keep up with the fast-growing volume of radiology documents—as well as the steadily increasing volume of emergency medicine and pathology documents—without adding staff and costs. Even though coders were processing a high volume of documents per hour, they were still not able to keep pace with the ever-growing demand.

**Highlights**
By implementing the Optum CAC solution, Acadiana:
- Reduced claim denial rates by five percent
- Strengthened audit capabilities and coder support
- Improved efficiencies through automation, manager tools, and straight-to-bill capabilities
- Doubled the number of documents processed per hour
After evaluating computer-assisted coding vendors in the marketplace, ACS found the support needed in Optum’s Computer-Assisted Coding (CAC) solution. Optum CAC features the proprietary and patented natural language processing (NLP) technology, Optum LifeCode®, which understands the syntax and semantics of medical records to abstract clinical facts with their full context. ACS decided Optum CAC would provide the most flexibility, as well as expedite return on investment with a fast implementation and go-live process.

“Optum360 has been an enormous benefit to our company. Our coding and billing processes have improved immensely since we instituted it,” said Bernadine Smith, CPC, RCC, PCS, manager, ACS coding department. “Optum360 not only affords ACS with computer-assisted coding solutions for our company, but it also provides an efficient workflow management system. ACS is delighted to have Optum360 as a partner in today’s competitive billing environment.”

Results

ACS coders now process almost twice the number of documents per hour as they were able to process manually. Optum CAC’s coding support helped ACS increase coding accuracy, which in turn helped reduce denials by five percent. In addition, the automation of charge entry has made a positive impact on ACS’ workflow, boosting productivity and compliance to support the organization’s efforts to offer clients competitive rates while also strengthening its own bottom line.

ACS realized immediate benefits from the Optum CAC executive dashboard, which helped the company better track documents’ progress through the coding cycle, as well as monitor local and remote coders and improve ongoing compliance efforts. The dashboard has provided additional data and analytics that would otherwise not be possible to extract with manual coding processes.

“The dashboard is a wonderful tool,” said ACS senior vice president Peggy Kelly. “I don’t know of anything in the industry like it for coding radiology and ER.” By tracking and assessing daily workflows, managers can pinpoint and address snags in their processes.

In addition, a combination of reporting functions and other tools within Optum CAC help ACS with its physician education efforts. This becomes more significant as ICD-10 approaches since the physician documentation and specificity within the new code set will be the key driver to the success of coding output. ACS intends to continue working with Optum360 to make a seamless transition to ICD-10.