COLAcentral™

COLA implemented CompWALK's client portal to better interact with the laboratories they accredit.

COLAcentral®
Faster, friendlier, & more organized

BACKGROUND

COLA is the largest, private nonprofit clinical laboratory accreditor in the United States, overseeing more than 7,500 clinical laboratories and integrated health systems. COLA was founded in 1988 as a private alternative to help laboratories stay in compliance with the new Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA). In 1993, the Health Care Financing Administration (now CMS) granted COLA deeming authority under CLIA, and in 1997 The Joint Commission (TJC) also recognized COLA's laboratory accreditation program.

INTRODUCING COLAcentral

COLA was seeking a way to not only provide accreditation services to their laboratories, but also create a partnership with them to improve laboratory operations and better serve their patients. COLA's internal IT team developed COLAcentral, an online client portal for COLA laboratories to prepare for onsite surveys, store and share documents, manage personnel, view proficiency testing results and more.

This portal was the first of its kind in the clinical laboratory space. No other accrediting body had the ability to interact with their clients in real-time and exchange information. This differentiated COLA from some of their larger competitors, utilizing the latest and greatest technology within the organization in addition to providing this technology to benefit their labs. With the success of COLAcentral and similar compliance solutions, COLA's internal IT team spun off to form NextLOGiK in 2013 to provide these tools to an array of regulated and accredited industries.

REDESIGNED & REVAMPED

"The NextLOGiK team took time to speak directly with the laboratorians that use COLAcentral daily." Said Doug Beigel, CEO of COLA. "Utilizing this feedback and involving our labs in the redesign is what made the new COLAcentral such a success."

Doug Beigel, CEO COLA
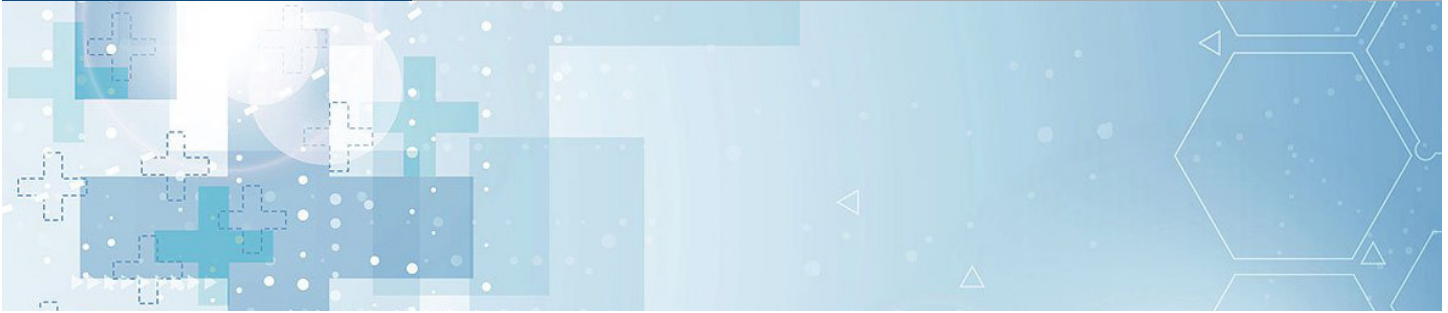
COLA labs had been using COLAcentral for eight years and it was time to revisit the portal functionality, structure and design. COLA again partnered with NextLOGiK to take the existing portal and re-write the code focusing on speed and usability. Utilizing feedback from clients, expertise in UX/UI (User Experience/User Interface), a new software architecture and a beta 'soft-launch', NextLOGiK released the completely redesigned COLAcentral to all of COLA's laboratories in June of 2016.

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Before any development work began, NextLOGiK's User Experience Director, Jeff Kalb, sat down with COLA's accreditation and customer support teams to discuss how laboratories interact with the system, how COLA employees interact with the system and gather feedback from both parties. This discussion and feedback evolved into a set of wireframes that outlined priorities for the new system and how these are implemented into a new portal structure. Utilizing the detailed wireframes, the portal was reconfigured with speed, organization and aesthetic in mind.

FEATURE & FUNCTIONALITY ENHANCEMENTS

The most notable enhancement in the new COLAcentral is the speed. 100% of COLA's clients that participated in the soft-launch noticed the site was faster. This is due to the revamped code structure of the platform and enhanced software architecture. Also included on the new system is a laboratory dashboard to manage multiple laboratories upon signing in, get a snapshot of their last survey date, general lab information, personnel updates and test systems overview.

The refreshed document repository features additional categories to further organize files along with the functionality to upload multiple files at one time in a fraction of the time. In addition, a Solutions Library was developed by clinical laboratory subject matter experts to provide customizable templates and logs for COLA laboratories and consultants.

Dynamic self assessments are now available for clients to complete online, only showing the sections and standards relating to the test systems done at their lab along with the ability to print out blank self assessments.

CREATING A BUZZ

NextLOGiK worked closely with COLA to develop and implement a successful launch of the new COLAcentral, including a two month 'beta' soft-launch. The COLAcentral platform was released to laboratories and consultants representing a small sample of COLA's clients. COLA and NextLOGiK's marketing teams collaborated throughout the development and launch of COLAcentral to inform their clients that a new portal was coming, update them on the portal progress and provide video tutorials walking them through the new features and navigation.

RELEASE & RESULTS

After months of collaboration, a successful beta program and an integrated marketing campaign, NextLOGiK and COLA released the new COLAcentral in batches to COLA's 7,500+ laboratories over two days.

"I have almost 100 labs that I manage. Without the access to COLAcentral, it would be almost impossible to keep up with the paperwork involved. COLAcentral has greatly reduced the amount of time I spend managing these labs and allows me to spend more time helping them remain compliant" said Barry Craig, Lab Consultant at Laboratory Consulting LLC.

The new COLAcentral has transformed the way COLA's clients operate their laboratories daily. Consultants and hospital systems are spending less time managing paperwork and more time advising laboratories. Smaller labs also benefit from the portal, requiring less staff and man hours to manage compliance documentation and deadlines.