Case Study:
Home Healthcare

National home healthcare provider partners with GDS for a secure, high-performance connectivity, voice and collaboration service that improves productivity and saves more than $1.2 million per year.

A leading provider of in-home healthcare, palliative care and hospice services, as well as facility-based care and home- and community-based services, came to GDS for help with their growing business.

With more than 700 locations operating in 35 states and the District of Columbia, the company has consistently grown both organically and through acquisitions.

Technology plays an important role in the delivery of home health services. However, many of the company's locations lacked reliable, high-performance connectivity and had a mixture of outdated telephone systems. Supporting this inconsistent IT environment was costly and challenging, and distracted the company's IT team from strategic initiatives.

The company turned to Global Data Systems (GDS) for assistance with the design, architecture, implementation and management of a robust connectivity and communications infrastructure. GDS leveraged its intelligent software-defined WAN (SD-WAN) network, cloud-based communications platform and security expertise to create a highly customized solution.

"GDS has been a long-term partner and presented a comprehensive solution that addressed the connectivity and communication needs of our branch locations," said the company's CIO. "By expanding our relationship with GDS, we gained a secure, fully managed solution that improves our operations, reduces risk and saves us a substantial amount of money."

Company Stats

Industry:
Home Healthcare

Presence:
700+ locations in 35 states and Washington D.C.

At A Glance

Challenges
- Inadequate bandwidth, service provider outages, multipe IT vendors

Solution
- Managed, secure SD-WAN solution called Next Generation Connectivity

Results
- Increased network speed and bandwidth
- Cost savings, and one simple bill

Challenge

Staff members could not effectively run their applications due to inadequate bandwidth, and service provider outages caused business disruptions. The company's central IT department struggled to manage multiple vendors, some of whom were slow to respond when issues arose, and a wide array of technology platforms. There were no standards in place for technology at branch locations and inventory management was nearly impossible. Furthermore, because of the variant systems and providers in place, **no one knew exactly who to call for support when an outage occurred**. Then there was billing — the company was receiving more than 1,000 invoices a month from the various service providers.

To compound matters, the company was in a rapid growth cycle. As it grew, the company also inherited a variety of phone systems, many of which were quite old. Some locations even had a separate phone system for each of its business units.

"You can't find support for some of these phone systems, and that presented a lot of challenges for our offices," the CIO said. "Another business challenge is the cost of maintaining some of the systems they had out in the field. It was becoming very expensive. And our staff lacked modern phone system features, having to rely on IT to perform many basic functions such as forwarding a line."

From a business perspective, the company was struggling to keep up with the pace of growth. The IT team had to meet deadlines for integrating acquired locations and new sites, but the time required to provision Internet connectivity caused delays. Fiber-optic connections could take up to 150 days if the building didn't already have fiber-optic services.

Solution

GDS architected a managed, secure SD-WAN solution called Next Generation Connectivity (NGC) that provides the bandwidth needed to support day-to-day operations at each of the company's locations. The GDS solution includes a backup connection — should the primary circuit go down, the solution will automatically failover to an LTE network for Internet connectivity.

"That's something we did not have before," said the CIO. "In the past, our offices have experienced downtime, so it's a huge relief for these agencies to have a backup connection. It will not provide as much bandwidth as the primary circuit, but it will keep the agency operational."

GDS also designed a cloud-based phone system to serve as a global communications platform for all of the company's locations. The solution is more reliable and stable than the legacy phone systems and puts more features in the hands of users. The company's IT department will have one standard platform to support, with a web-based interface that allows for remote administration.

The solution includes a security appliance that protects the company's network from cyberattacks. The GDS implementation team visits each location and upgrades the Internet connection, installs the security appliance and phone system, and follows an eight-step procedure that ensures everything is configured consistently and working properly. If the wired Internet circuit cannot be provisioned quickly, GDS leverages the LTE network to serve as the primary connection on day one.

Once the solution is in place, GDS takes over monitoring and management from its state-of-the-art Network Operations Center (NOC). GDS assumes responsibility for the performance and availability of the network and immediately addresses any security issues that arise. In addition, GDS provides one consolidated bill for all services that uploads automatically into the company's accounting system.

"It took one or two people to manage all the bills from the other service providers, and telecom invoices are never easy to understand. GDS makes it easy."

Results

GDS worked closely with the customer to develop a strategic plan that provides a rapid return on investment. They discussed targeting the highest-cost sites first to start realizing cost savings, and to group sites geographically for implementation efficiency.

"In the end, we used a blend of those strategies, focusing first on those sites that were on month-to-month service provider contracts," the CIO said. "There are a few where we're going to coordinate the switchover to avoid early termination fees. If the current circuits will support the rollout of the new phone system, we're moving forward with that upgrade and deploying the backup connection. Then we'll come back and migrate the primary circuit whenever it comes out of contract."

Extensive upfront planning coupled with seamless deployment services has enabled GDS to move rapidly and efficiently to migrate sites to the new solution. The project has gone very smoothly, and the company has already recognized significant benefits.

"The feedback we're getting from the agencies is that they absolutely love the new phone system and phones. They're also saying that **the increased network speed and bandwidth is improving the efficiency of their operations**," the CIO said. "In addition, we are realizing significant cost savings that is currently exceeding previously projected targets."

The savings comes from reduced connectivity costs and IT operational overhead. With one fully managed network, the company's IT team has fewer vendors to deal with and a significantly lower maintenance and support burden.

"We have just one vendor, or 'one throat to choke' as some people say," said the CIO. "But on top of that, Global Data Systems provides much faster response time and excellent service. Global Data Systems is a trusted partner that is there to support our business."

Consolidated billing also saves time and money. GDS was already providing one bill for services prior to the launch of the upgrade project, and structured it in a format that's ready to go into the company's accounting system. As sites are migrated to the new solution, costs are incorporated into the same bill.

"That's a huge time saver for the accounting team. It took one or two people to manage all the bills from the other service providers, and telecom invoices are never easy to understand," the CIO said. **"GDS makes it easy."**

In addition to the increased reliability of the network, advanced technology of the voice platform and improved support structure, the company is also saving money! The GDS NGC solution it adds new functionality and reliability, yet saves this customer about 20 percent on their telecom spend! Large organizations such as this one can save more than a million dollars annually by upgrading to GDS NGC managed SD-WAN services.

The company continues to grow and add locations both organically and through acquisition. The GDS solution provides the scalability to support that aggressive growth, with the ability to bring locations online within days.

"Having GDS as a partner definitely allows the business to scale even faster," said the CIO. "Again, having that one trusted vendor is a huge benefit. It's a great relationship."