



Empowering the Remote Workforce of Today and Tomorrow

Major Health Care Facility Turns to Black Box for Secure, Turnkey Collaboration Solutions

INDUSTRY: Healthcare

COMPANY OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY:

This U.S. health care provider is a major academic medical center operating more than 20 hospitals and clinics across three states. For over a decade, the provider has enjoyed a successful and strategic partnership with Black Box for outsourced installation, support, and maintenance of their telephony and collaboration systems.

CHALLENGE

Keeping Employees Safe and Productive While Protecting Patient Data

With the onset of the global coronavirus pandemic in early 2020, this health care provider needed to protect as much of its workforce as possible from infection. Almost overnight, the organization had to move several thousand non-patient-facing personnel off site and outfit their home offices with the full capabilities they needed to do their jobs. An example is the radiology staff, who do not have direct contact with patients but needed the ability to read x-rays, MRIs, and CAT scans and provide their reports remotely.

Since one of the hazards of a remote workforce is increased exposure to cyber attacks, network security was a large concern. The customer needed to empower its remote workers while also ensuring maximum protection for the network and maintaining compliance with HIPAA and other regulations.

SOLUTION

Secure, Fast, and Simple Remote Connectivity

Black Box worked with the customer to design a strategy by which employees would be able to take home and use their company

CHALLENGES

- Protect employees from COVID-19
- Enable remote workforce as quickly as possible
- Ensure network security and data privacy

SOLUTION

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RESULTS

- A permanently empowered remote workforce
- A platform to build on for the future

BENEFITS

- Greater productivity to serve more patients
- Tremendous cost savings and greater profitability

desktop or laptop computers and VOIP phones. The Black Box team configured each device with Power over Ethernet (PoE) and rapid configuration and setup tools.

In addition, each remote employee was equipped with a Cisco Meraki MX67 or MX68 cloud managed network security appliance to enable auto VPN and secure SD-WAN connectivity — with up to 200 Mbps throughput — over the public cloud. In the customer's data center, Meraki MX450 with 10G SFP+ WAN interfaces provide high-speed connectivity protected with advanced security, together with cloud-based, centralized network management.



OUTCOMES

A Permanent Platform for a Growing Remote Workforce

Working with Black Box, this health care organization has realized two key business outcomes over the last year: empowered professionals who are able to perform their jobs securely and transparently from their home offices, and confirmation of a built-in technology infrastructure to support a growing number of remote workers on a permanent basis.

A Winning Partnership for Immediate and Long-Term Needs

As the health care provider's primary provider of telephony solutions, Black Box has been working with the customer for some time on a project to migrate all of its operations to new, Cisco-based collaboration systems. One aspect of that project has been testing and piloting a workable home office solution based on the Meraki systems that could not only give remote employees transparent access to their familiar applications, but enable them to do so in a HIPAA-compliant manner.

A More Profitable and Effective Operation

In addition to the business outcomes, the health care provider is realizing some clear operational benefits from its expanded remote workforce. With a main campus that is located in a dense urban area, the organization has few options for expanding its physical plant. By off-siting administrative personnel, as well as clinicians such as radiologists who have no direct patient contact, the organization can now repurpose its existing square footage for patient care — at a fraction of the cost of a building program. After realizing that many types of employees can work just as effectively from home as from

an office on the main campus, the facility will be able to expand the numbers of patients that can be served across the entire operation.

The employees themselves are singing the praises of the Cisco technology, which has made them even more productive. The high-speed connectivity of the Meraki systems, for instance, enables the radiologists to download and access imaging files much faster than the on-campus network. Since they can read and report on a greater number of files in a given time period, they're able to serve more patients than before.

LOOKING AHEAD

Remote Workers Signal the Healthcare Future

A year after the coronavirus pandemic forced this health care provider to drastically accelerate and expand its remote collaboration workflows, the organization is realizing the many advantages of a workforce empowered to contribute efficiently and securely from home. As a result, many workers who were originally off-sited temporarily will stay remote on a permanent basis. At the same time, Black Box is working with the customer to expand the permanent at-home employee population. One example is the financial operations staff, of which 60 workers were in the initial group to move off site and another 90 have just been set up with the home office equipment.

Longer-term, the health care facility is looking to expand the remote framework even greater contribution and collaboration among all of its own facilities and those of its affiliates. One example are "trade missions" in which clinicians are able to travel to health care facilities in other countries to share treatment methodologies and promote new methods of patient care.

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