



Digitally Transform Rapidly Growing Healthcare Consortium

Centralize 300+ disparate networks with SD-WAN for manageability, agility, and HIPAA compliance

INDUSTRY: Healthcare

SUMMARY:

Hundreds of homegrown field office networks were crippling a healthcare consortium's ability to execute its business promise to provide IT and compliance support. A lack of consistency and almost no security measures meant that the home office couldn't resolve network challenges or ensure security at field locations — exactly what they were being paid to do.

Acquiring new clients at a rate of three to five per week, the healthcare consortium urgently needed a single network architecture that could be centrally managed, quickly deployed, and, most importantly, that would be cost-efficient. After just a half dozen installations the consortium saw exactly these outcomes, that's when they turned to Black Box. The consortium asked Black Box engineers to provide a large-scale solution capable of servicing all their locations.

To ensure as little disruption as possible to users and the economy for the consortium, Black Box architects worked with the consortium's IT team to create a roll-out blueprint for easy-to-set-up network deployments. The recommended SD-WAN solution provided consistent, standardized HIPAA compliance and enabled the consortium's IT team to control network traffic across the enterprise.

Two years into the project, the advantages of the new SD-WAN continue to grow. Clients consistently benefit from network installation times that have been cut in half and ensure minimal on-site disruption. The consortium has profited from deployments that met tight budget constraints and, most importantly, enabled centralized network support and security – the consortium's main values to its clients. The new SD-WAN meets all HIPAA regulations mitigating security risks and the resulting federal fines that could financially cripple the company or its clients.

CHALLENGES

- Manage and maintain 300+ dispersed, disparate networks
- Ensure consistent HIPAA compliance and network security at every location
- Deliver consistent network uptime
- Operate networks having no consistent site-to-site hardware, software, or configurations

SOLUTION

- Establish a uniform, cost-effective Cisco Meraki SD-WAN network across all sites that can be easily managed remotely via one centralized dashboard
- Create step-by-step network blueprint using standardized equipment ensuring network installation in less than a week and consistent, site-to-site performance
- Leverage Black Box's national footprint to deploy field teams to new locations with consistent, repeatable outcomes
- Install next-generation firewall with content filtering, advanced malware protection, and the latest security features to ensure HIPAA compliance

RESULTS

- Integrate more than 300 locations into a Cisco Meraki SD-WAN network managed by a handful of HQ IT professionals
- Mitigate untold risk of homegrown networks with no security features in a highly regulated industry
- Guarantee 99.999% uptime and the ability to control traffic, managed role-based security and push updates and patches in a few keystrokes

VALUE

- Promote massive, scalable company growth with network uniformity, centralized management, and defined network onboarding
- Protect the consortium and hundreds of clients from business-ending security threats and non-compliance fees

CHALLENGE

Centrally manage and secure 300+ nationally dispersed networks

Rapidly growing, the consortium successfully expanded its nationwide roster of client members. But success came with IT growing pains.

Each client had its own IT network; some were professionally installed and supported, but most were not, including one practice's network that had been set up by a summer intern two years earlier. When the intern left, so did all the knowledge of the network configuration, infrastructure, and equipment.

If the network went down, panicked healthcare personnel would call the consortium's help desk. The calls left everyone frustrated: local users with a network problem, and remote IT personnel trying to resolve it.

This was a growing problem and all too common, everyday situation. The consortium's IT staff had to figure out how to manage and support hundreds of locations each with disparate network configurations and little on-site expertise. The also meant the IT throughout the enterprise was riddled with security holes — an enormous risk to HIPAA compliance.

SOLUTION

Centralize, simplify, and secure network technology, management, and support with SD-WAN

After success in solving security and downtime issues at several locations across the country, the healthcare consortium's IT team turned to Black Box for a large-scale solution. Experience deploying Cisco Meraki SD-WAN solutions led Black Box's network architects to recommend it as a perfect fit for simplicity, consistency, and ease of management. The Black Box team worked with the consortium's IT team to set up one, centrally managed dashboard and enterprise-wide network policies. To reduce costs, the Black Box team also negotiated a bulk contract for the consortium. Black Box then leveraged its nationwide technical teams to install the network consistently, predictably, and even simultaneously at locations from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon.

Within weeks, the enterprise-wide network was up and running and the consortium's IT team could log onto the dashboard to monitor and manage the entire network. With centralized security

management, the consortium no longer has to worry about HIPAA compliance for any or all of its member sites. The Cisco Meraki SD-WAN solution guarantees 99.999% uptime and provides the latest security features, including a next-generation firewall, content filtering, and advanced malware protection. More importantly, it gives the central IT team the ability to make updates and patches for any branch within minutes.

Almost two years later, the healthcare consortium is thriving and continues to add practice partners to its 300+ member network. Network management and support problems are now a thing of the past. The consortium's IT team takes care of adding new clients to the existing SD-WAN without having to hire additional network personnel. In the field, Black Box takes care of the on-site network installation ensuring consistency in configuration and performance.

OUTCOMES

Secure, simplified, scalable growth with centralized network management

The SD-WAN solution not only solved the healthcare consortium's operational headaches but also gave them the ability to grow at scale. With centralized network management, a consistent network installation blueprint, and a trusted partner with the geographical footprint to match their own, the healthcare consortium has a ready-made network onboarding process for any partner, anywhere in the U.S. The reliability and ease of management gained from the SD-WAN solution enables the consortium's IT team to be more productive and able to support more partners, ultimately generating a greater ROI.

With the comprehensive SD-WAN security platform, the IT team can make nearly instantaneous updates and patches at any sites. This feature alone protects the healthcare consortium's revenue from HIPAA non-compliance fees and the untold harm to its reputation a hack would create. The single SD-WAN solution positively impacted the IT consortium operations (and bottom line) with immediate operational efficiency, larger client (and revenue) capacity, and mitigated risk.

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