

tw telecom Delivers Healthy Cost Cuts for HealthPlus Hospitals



THE COMPANY
HealthPlus

INDUSTRY
Healthcare

EMPLOYEES
750

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Slashed data transport costs by \$72,000 annually
- Outsourced security liberated staff labor-hours for other critical projects
- Managed Security Service delivers HIPAA-compliant patient data handling

COMMUNICATIONS APPLICATIONS

- Secure VPN data transport
- Healthcare application data sharing

The Challenge

HealthPlus owns and operates four acute-care hospitals in Houston, Texas and Los Angeles, California. Each of the parent company's facilities generate, store, move and access large amounts of data annually. Digital medical applications have evolved to replace "stubby" pencil processes and records to enable practitioners to process claims settlements, verify patient insurance coverage, track disease management programs or read x-rays, among many others.

Recently, Tony DeCabooter, Assistant IT Director/Network Administrator, for Doctors Hospital Parkway+Tidwell in Houston (owned by HealthPlus) experienced a rapid pulse while reviewing their telecom bill.

"We were spending an obnoxious amount of money as an organization on data transport costs—particularly to our L.A. hospitals. That's when we started asking around for a telecom provider who could give us the most speed for our buck. What we ended up with was basically a VPN [virtual private network] solution that meets HIPAA requirements for security at a significant savings," said DeCabooter.

About tw telecom

tw telecom delivers the most advanced telecommunications solutions on the market to a wide spectrum of businesses and organizations across the United States. Since 1993, we have built a legacy of success through exceptional customer care, remarkable products and powerful networks. These strengths enable us to deliver scalable solutions that help customers improve their business metrics. For more information, please visit www.twtelecom.com.



tw telecom SOLUTIONS

- Managed Security Service (MSS)
- Dedicated Internet Access

The Solution

tw telecom specialists built-out a VPN solution to HealthPlus's buildings. This was based on Dedicated Internet Access connecting into tw telecom's network locally, avoiding long-haul charges between the two cities. Driven by HIPAA regulations to protect patient data, HealthPlus chose to outsource encrypted tunneling of its sites' data using tw telecom's Managed Security Service (MSS).

Engineers installed a firewall device at each location to provide a secure VPN based on point-to-point data encryption. Between Dedicated Internet Access and security service, HealthPlus received the turnkey solution they sought.

Applications

The new services provided encrypted tunnels to connect the five sites and delivered a WAN that supported the company's primary medical clientserver system. Employees used the VPN to access mainframe applications to complete claims settlement and patient verification of insurance for example. The network further provided transport for patient exam images in the hospital's picture archive communications system (PACS) network. Healthcare workers also used the Internet to access relevant information like disease management practices from the Center for Disease Control.

The Value to the Business

Financial Benefits

According to Mitch Nawojczyk, IT director at Doctors Hospital, T1 long-haul charges linking their Houston and L.A. facilities were killing them. By contrast, "The tw telecom T1s are the same fee to us regardless of which city they originate in. We figure that will save us about \$215,000 over the next three years. The savings were such that we were able to upgrade from fractional to a full T1 service, lower costs and have plenty of headroom to meet future demand."

Business Benefits

tw telecom's Managed Security Service delivers the firewalls and healthy encryption necessary to meet HIPAA guidelines.

"Everything that stays on my network is encrypted," explained DeCabooter. "Users can get into an LA file server from anywhere in the network knowing that the link is secure. That lets us check-off this requirement from our list."

By outsourcing the management of the network, HealthPlus IT managers were able to reallocate much-needed labor hours for other assignments. "Since we've offloaded network management, we've been able to tackle a huge list of IT projects because we now have the time for them," said DeCabooter. "We run lean like everyone else in the industry and the new service is a big help to us."

"The CIO's decision to go with tw telecom's T1 and Managed Security services was a very wise business choice all around. It was a win-win situation because we've received great benefit for our dollar compared to what we were receiving before."

Mitch Nawojczyk,

IT Director,

Doctors Hospital

(HealthPlus subsidiary)

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tw telecom Performance Metrics Summary

Goal	Before tw telecom Solution	After tw telecom Solution	Result
Significantly reduce data transport costs	Baseline legacy solution costs	\$6,000 per month savings	Projected three-year savings of about \$215,000
Meet HIPAA data-handling requirements	Unknown legacy vendor network protection level	Guaranteed encryption service level	Secure VPN delivers HIPAA compliant point-to-point data encryption
Reassign small staff to work on mission-critical projects	Customer IT staff managing network	tw telecom MSS staff managing network	Small IT staff liberated to tackle other projects

Technology Benefits

The **tw telecom** on-premises managed firewall has already protected the hospital network against viruses.

"We had an instance where a virus showed up on our network," explained DeCabooter. "The Security Group at **tw telecom** identified which port was being attacked and blocked it from getting to the WAN by creating a new firewall. They had that figured out within about 15 minutes of calling them. Another time, we had a virus that took out some of our encrypted tunnels. Within 20 minutes we knew what virus it was and where it was coming from."

When Health Plus's transport needed to expand beyond its current limits, DeCabooter picked up the phone to get more bandwidth. "With **tw telecom**, we got expandability that we didn't have before. Upping our bandwidth won't incur any hardware costs. The managed services handle all of that."

The tw telecom Experience

Most of the Security Operations Centers staffers hold CISSP Certifications (Certified Information Systems Security Professional). Security experience combined with years of IP network engineering experience have allowed DeCabooter and Nawojczyk to rely on a high level of service from the team.

"Recently, our experience has been, pick up the phone, start a task, and within minutes someone calls back," said DeCabooter. "One time I called when a line went down and by the time I

reached them to open a trouble ticket; they had already opened one and were monitoring it. The bottom line is that their customer support is phenomenal when compared to other vendors I've worked with."

The HealthPlus staff credits the competence of the **tw telecom** engineering team in helping to set up a reliable topology. For example, the new VPN network relies upon independent T1 connections. So if any one connection were to go down, the other sites would not be affected. Previously, if one of the company's hub sites had gone down, all the others would have lost connectivity too.

"I can tell you about our medical stuff, but we didn't have the expertise that they did," said Nawojczyk. "One of the redundant elements they engineered was creating multiple tunnels so that if one tunnel collapses between sites, there's another one that the connection can take. That feature increased the availability of our network to the applications our internal customers rely upon to deliver health care services."

About HealthPlus

HealthPlus was founded in 1997 by its current management team with long-term experience in managing hospitals and developing physician partnerships in urban and suburban communities. HealthPlus owns and operates hospitals in the Houston and Los Angeles areas. HealthPlus offers a proven track record, an experienced management team, accessibility, and a focus on the core acute-care business. Please visit us at www.Health-Plus.net.