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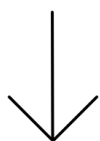
+ Know Your Network

Network Solutions Create Digital Agility for Businesses

FROM COMCAST BUSINESS

How a network upgrade helped a healthcare institution pivot to Covid-19 testing

The pandemic has caused a rapid and dramatic shift in business needs in nearly every industry, but perhaps no more so than in healthcare.

Many organizations in this space — healthcare providers, pharmaceutical firms, medical equipment manufacturers and biomedical researchers — have had to shift many employees to working remotely, quickly pivot to telemedicine and ramp up new patient care and business functions.

A world in which business needs are more fluid and unpredictable has also forced businesses to pursue digital agility — that is, the ability to launch and scale up new digital business initiatives in response to shifting market conditions.

Take, for instance, the case of one healthcare institution that pivoted to focus primarily on Covid-19 testing as soon as it became clear that widespread testing was a public health imperative. However, the organization quickly realized that it didn't have the network infrastructure needed to scale its operations securely and reliably, and it worked with Comcast Business to find solutions.

How did improving its network help th

How did improving its network help the organization scale up Covid-19 testing
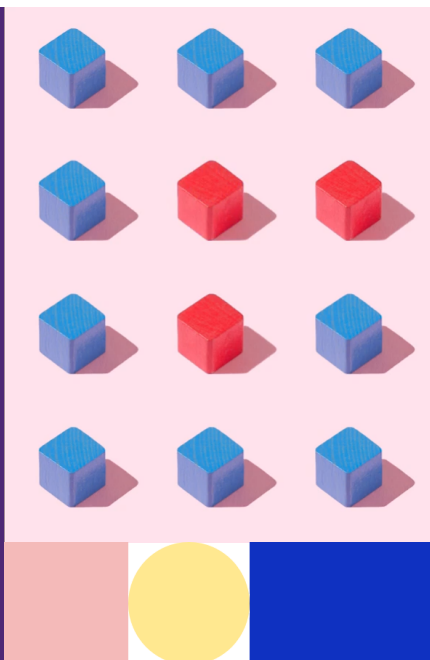
By upgrading its network to a software-defined wide network (SD-WAN) and procuring additional internet connections, the healthcare institution was able to achieve the speed, bandwidth and reliability it needed process thousands of time-sensitive tests per day.

"Their first priority was to ramp up their network capa and to help protect it with a stateful network firewall," says Allan Langfield, Executive Director of ActiveCore Operations at Comcast Business. "They needed a secu direct connection to the internet, and they wanted to securely connect multiple sites that they could suppo

The organization worked with Comcast Business to in its SD-WAN solution, which operates on the technolog company's proprietary ActiveCore software-defined networking (SDN) platform, as well as two 10-gigabit ethernet dedicated internet (EDI) connections in a ve condensed timeframe.

Implementing SD-WAN can better equip businesses meet the challenges of tomorrow, whether by easily adding new locations as an organization grows, or by enabling new digital products and services.

Top three factors driving SD-WAN adoption

Source: IDG

How did Comcast Business deliver reliability and redundancy?

The healthcare institution had a recent incident that nearly knocked out its network connection. That experience showed the organization that it needed to build out its network in order to help prevent interruptions in critical processes. Installing two new EDI connections provided critical network redundanc that didn't previously exist.
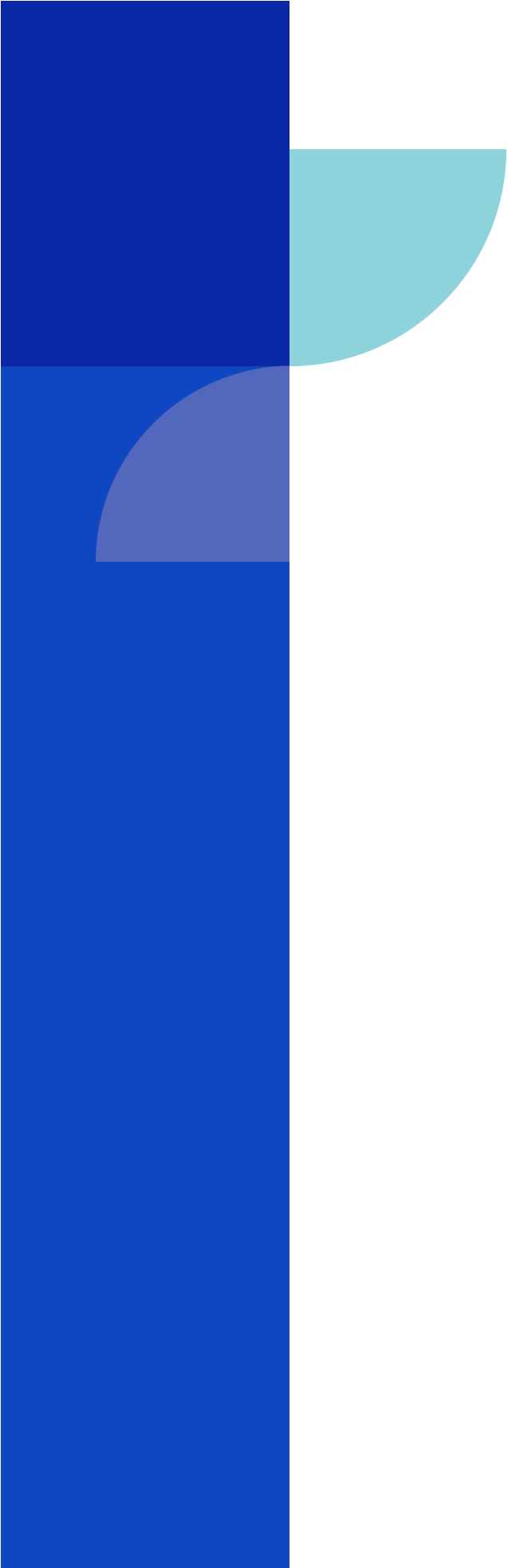
"That gives them the benefit of business continuity," says David Buckley, Comcast Business Strategic Account Executive. "They have the peace of mind to know that they have the actual network infrastructu to access the internet on the Comcast network, which is diverse and redundant to their existing carrier. Having that bandwidth there is essential, because if t other carrier goes down, we're there to step in, and vic versa."

Those backup connections need to provide the speed and bandwidth to handle data-heavy applications and potential spikes in data processing needs. Organizations with similar needs could take advantag of the capability of SD-WAN to handle failover when outages or interruptions occur.

CIOs can effectively manage uptime by pre-selecting

which network traffic to prioritize if a failure occurs. That means that the most essential applications and data transfers don't have to experience disruption. More reliable connectivity means enhanced productivity and a better customer experience.

How can SD-WAN help improve network security?

SD-WAN has several features that bolster network security. Comcast Business' SD-WAN solution has a fully integrated firewall that can identify and block potential threats without disrupting the performance of the network. SD-WAN can also incorporate an existing MPLS line for secure, private connections, allowing organizations to bypass the public internet for their more critical data.

SD-WAN also offers the ability for more flexible network segmentation, which can minimize the impact of a cyberattack. Proper segmentation can limit the attack surface and prevent an attack from propagating beyond the borders of the segment.

How can SD-WAN improve business agility?

SD-WAN delivers application-aware traffic routing and segmentation, allowing IT teams to have much more control when adjusting to new business needs or prioritizing mission-critical operations. IT teams can be much more agile in responding to changing needs, prioritizing bandwidth and network requirements and adding or removing sites as

requirements and adding or removing sites as necessary. Plus, they can easily analyze traffic patterns to better fine-tune their network in an agile and scalable manner.

Network administrators can set up rules directing traffic from specific applications based on connection status or the priority of a given application. For example, as streaming background music has become a must-have for employees focused on the task at hand— from surgeons in hospitals to dishwashers in restaurants— administrators can make sure that streaming music doesn't slow down critical data transfers and application performance.

"With SD-WAN, you can start to bring in broadband," says Jeff Lewis, Vice President, ActiveCore Products and Solutions, Comcast Business. "In a smart network environment, broadband translates into capacity, and you can move those non-mission-critical traffic elements to an appropriate transport."

That means that music can play on, without interfering with critical business functions.

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