



Community bank facilitates more efficient and responsive customer service with business-driven SD-WAN

Entegra Bank increased bandwidth fivefold and cut WAN costs by more than 50 percent by leveraging the Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform to embrace 100 percent broadband and retire branch routers

From its humble beginnings in 1922 as a small building and loan company in Macon County, North Carolina, today's Entegra Bank has evolved into a full-service financial institution with 19 retail banking branches (and growing) across Western North Carolina, Upstate South Carolina, and North Georgia. While much has changed for the bank over the

past 96 years, one thing has remained the same: a devout focus on serving the local community.

Loren Long, senior vice president and chief technology officer at Entegra Bank puts it this way: "Whether it's a neighbor from down the road coming in to make a deposit, or one of our many small business owners applying for a loan to expand,



INCREASED
AVAILABLE BANDWIDTH
FIVEFOLD



REDUCED COSTS
BY OVER 50
PERCENT



CUT BRANCH
OPENINGS FROM 2
MONTHS TO 2 WEEKS

the business of banking is fundamentally about people serving people.”

Long’s role as principal technologist is to make sure technology used by the bank facilitates a personal relationship between employees and their customers, not impede it. As he points out, achieving that lofty goal is not always easy.

“Achieving synergy to let everyone just do their jobs and serve our customers, yet do that securely and seamlessly, requires a lot from IT,” says Long. “We have a wide range of applications and services constantly running in the background to keep us compliant and protected. Then there are regular Windows and antivirus updates, third-party monitoring on our network and firewalls, and backups that keep growing because of our paperless banking initiatives. It all runs across our WAN, which had been a pain point for me since becoming a manager in 2004.”



EdgeConnect puts more control in our hands to route application traffic using all available bandwidth by bonding links and using the most efficient path instead of relying on a managed router provider. Through Orchestrator, I can reroute traffic with a click of the mouse. It gives us tremendous flexibility.

— Loren Long, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, Entegra Bank

The problem was that the bank’s previous router-centric MPLS network was expensive, and Long had to strike a careful balance to get just enough bandwidth without blowing the budget. To overcome these limitations, Long began using WAN optimization from Silver Peak in 2010. “With Silver Peak WAN optimization on our MPLS network, we saw an average of three times the throughput for real-time data,” he notes. “That was fantastic, and it solidified my confidence in Silver Peak technology.”

However, the cost and complexity of the MPLS network continued to rise.



EdgeConnect facilitates going all in with broadband

For several years after first being introduced to Silver Peak, Long observed that SD-WAN technology was maturing and broadband connectivity was becoming more secure and dependable. “I saw the convergence of these two technologies and recognized we finally had an opportunity to move away from our router-centric MPLS and simplify our WAN edge,” he explains.

Having seen what Silver Peak could do with its previous generation of WAN optimization, Long returned to Silver Peak, this time to build a software-defined wide-area network (SD-WAN) on the [Unity EdgeConnect™](#) SD-WAN edge platform. With capabilities such as tunnel bonding, [path conditioning](#), quality of service, and [dynamic path control](#) on a single, unified platform, EdgeConnect provided what Long needed to go all in with broadband and formally retire the bank’s router-centric MPLS network.

Today, Entegra Bank has deployed EdgeConnect at 22 sites including all 19 branches and three loan production offices. Each site is terminated with a fiber-based broadband as the primary connection and either cable, DSL or LTE as a secondary link. EdgeConnect also enabled Long to retire the bank's leased managed routers at the branches, and load balance between its two internet gateways at the primary data center. The complete, unified platform also includes the optional [Unity Boost™](#) WAN optimization performance pack to accelerate key applications. And the entire SD-WAN is centrally managed through [Unity Orchestrator™](#).

"Since deploying EdgeConnect and moving to all broadband, we've increased available bandwidth fivefold and cut costs by more than 50 percent," Long reports. "EdgeConnect puts more control in our hands to route application traffic using all available bandwidth by bonding links and using the most efficient path instead of relying on a managed router provider. Through Orchestrator, I can reroute traffic with a click of the mouse. It gives us tremendous flexibility."



To illustrate the impact on the business, Long tells of one branch employee who had always struggled to open a very large file. It took so long she'd go get a cup of coffee while the file loaded. Now, the same file opens in a few seconds. In fact, all the bank's applications, from core banking to email, VoIP, and video conferencing, run with assured availability and reliable performance.

Long remarks, "Instead of being delayed in their tasks or making customers wait because our network is slow, the EdgeConnect SD-WAN platform

shows how technology can empower employees to be more productive and serve our customers more effectively, which ultimately helps improve our bottom line."

Greater nimbleness to accelerate branch openings

As Entegra Bank continues acquiring branches from other banks to further expand its community reach, the EdgeConnect platform is enabling Long to dramatically accelerate branch openings. In fact, in just a few days his team can build an entire WAN edge infrastructure in a lab setting, fully configured and ready to build the server and workstations. The team can then move in the equipment over a weekend and have the new branch up and running as Entegra Bank on Monday morning. Including the time to acquire the broadband circuits, the entire process takes less than two weeks. In the past, just provisioning an MPLS circuit to open a new branch could take upwards of two months.

"The EdgeConnect SD-WAN platform provides Entegra Bank with greater nimbleness to advance our acquisition strategy and grow," says Long. "Banking is a very competitive industry, which means we have to be fast and responsive in pursuing new business opportunities. EdgeConnect gives us that sure footedness in IT to quickly facilitate requests from executive management."

He concludes, "Ultimately, our EdgeConnect SD-WAN gives our employees the freedom to do their jobs without worrying about technology. So they can focus on serving our customers with the highest quality experience possible. For a community bank there's nothing more important."

For more information on Silver Peak and our solutions, please visit: silver-peak.com

Customer

Entegra Bank was founded in 1922 as Macon Bank in Franklin, North Carolina. The name change occurred in 2014 when the bank completed a public offering, forming Entegra Financial Corp. and its wholly owned subsidiary Entegra Bank. Today, Entegra Bank serves communities across Western North Carolina, Upstate South Carolina, and North Georgia through 19 retail banking branches and three loan production offices, with total assets in excess of \$1.6 billion.

Challenge

Improve WAN and application performance for bank employees to serve customers more efficiently and responsively, and reduce cost and complexity at WAN edge to facilitate ongoing branch expansion

Solution

Deploy the EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform as a unified branch edge, retiring branch routers and enabling Entegra Bank to replace MPLS with 100 percent broadband, bonding a primary fiber connection with either cable, DSL, or LTE secondary links, and applying path conditioning, quality of service, dynamic path control, and the optional Boost performance pack to optimize WAN performance, efficiency, and availability across 22 sites

Results

- Increases available bandwidth fivefold and cut costs by more than 50%
- Reduces the time to open very large files from many minutes to a few seconds
- Facilitates bank employees to serve customers more efficiently and responsively
- Accelerates new branch openings from up to two months to less than two weeks
- Enables Entegra Bank to pursue its growth-through-acquisition strategy unimpeded by the WAN



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