Nationwide labor and employment law firm raises the bar for network services, improving efficiency and responsiveness to clients

Fisher Phillips optimizes network security, availability, and performance with Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform

When it comes to handling complex legal matters involving employment and labor, employers across the U.S.—and around the world—come to Fisher Phillips. Whether it's a class action suit, union dispute, or COVID-19 litigation, winning cases requires a team of talented attorneys who take the time to understand each client's unique business requirements. But it also takes technology. Fisher Phillips excels in both areas.

As a firm committed to delivering excellence in client services, Fisher Phillips invests in technologies like electronic document management, e-discovery, knowledge management systems, and online collaboration tools to improve efficiency and enhance productivity. But imagine the frustration of having a video conference drop in the middle of a client discussion, or being unable to access critical documents because the network is down.

IMPROVES EFFICIENCY

100% NETWORK UPTIME

ENHANCES SECURITY

Michael Steele, director of technology at Fisher Phillips, doesn't have to imagine—he witnessed the pain of network downtime firsthand. Steele was dealing with a managed WAN using low-bandwidth MPLS circuits to connect the firm's nationwide offices to its centralized private cloud and a handful of trusted SaaS applications. "Those MPLS connections were not reliable. We constantly had network problems that impacted the level of service to clients."
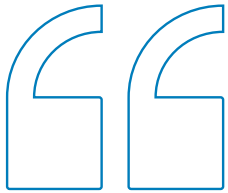
"With the Silver Peak SD-WAN, we have raised the bar on the performance, reliability, and security of our services. When we can provide the most efficient solutions for our attorneys, that helps them deliver more responsive service to our clients."

— Michael Steele, Director of Technology, Fisher Phillips, LLP

Greater resiliency with an easy-to-deploy SD-WAN solution

Steele knew about SD-WAN from industry news and events, and he saw it as a way to improve the resiliency and performance of the firm's network. His vision was to use multiple, higher-bandwidth broadband connections at each location instead of MPLS. But the solution needed to be secure, and easy to deploy and manage.

After evaluating a number of vendors, Steele narrowed the field to Silver Peak and VeloCloud. Working with Silver Peak partner Veristor, Steele ultimately selected the Unity EdgeConnect™ SD-WAN edge

platform. He says, "Security, availability, performance, and ease of management were all critical to us, and we saw that in EdgeConnect."

Steele adds, "Other SD-WAN vendors didn't have the strong partner relationships that Silver Peak has. Veristor augmented the team from Silver Peak, working with us throughout the evaluation process, validating network design, and assisting with implementation to make sure we had everything set up properly for a smooth deployment."

Over a three-month period, Steele and the teams from Silver Peak and Veristor, deployed EdgeConnect across Fisher Phillips's 37 offices and a data center, all in redundant configurations for high availability. Moreover, the SD-WAN implementation occurred simultaneously with installation of new broadband circuits to replace MPLS, as well as deploying a new cloud-based VoIP system.

"Our Silver Peak deployment went very smoothly," Steele notes. "It speaks to the ease of the EdgeConnect platform that we could deploy nearly 80 appliances, plus an entirely new edge network, in that short amount of time."

Steele says the ease of deploying EdgeConnect and moving to all broadband will also help accelerate opening new locations. Instead of taking months to have new MPLS circuits provisioned, he can now bring a new office online quickly. "We added a new office and data center this year. Each already had internet connections in place so those locations were online in one day."

Improving security and performance while simplifying the edge

Now having high-availability EdgeConnect appliances terminated with dual-bonded broadband circuits at each location, downtime due to circuit outages or brownouts is history. Steele was also able to simplify the edge footprint by retiring traditional routers and using the unified routing interoperability within EdgeConnect. Then, using the Unity Orchestrator™ management console, he created business intent overlays for different classes of applications to guarantee each class the required network resources based on business priority. For example, applications such as e-discovery and knowledge management are classified as critical, while the new cloud-based phone and video conferencing system is classified as real-time, and other SaaS applications such as Microsoft Office 365 and cloud-based document management are classified as trusted.

In fact, by enabling office locations to break out locally and securely to the VoIP service and SaaS applications through the stateful zone-based firewall in EdgeConnect, Steele says application performance and quality of experience have improved. "Other SD-WAN solutions wanted to backhaul traffic through a separate security service, which adds latency and additional points of failure. Cloud-based phone systems require priority, and they need a direct connection. Any time you add another hop you can degrade performance. Our ability to send that traffic straight to the phone provider only improves our voice capabilities, and ensures the highest quality of experience for our attorneys and clients."

In addition, Steele used the zone-based firewall to segment guest Wi-Fi traffic, creating a separate VLAN to keep guest internet traffic securely segmented from all other business traffic. General internet and other business traffic for the firm is routed through next-generation firewalls at regional security centers across the country.

Provides deep visibility into application traffic

As the person responsible for the network, Steele also values the efficiencies he's gained in IT. Having Orchestrator provides a centralize vantage point from which to manage the nationwide SD-WAN, push out updates, and troubleshoot issues when they arise. One of the most important things that brings Steele is greater visibility for his network team.

"In an environment with a bunch of routers and MPLS connections, especially when it's managed, you don't have any visibility between the LANs," Steele says. "Without understanding that traffic or having the ability to prioritize traffic LAN to LAN, it's extremely difficult to manage performance levels. Not only does Orchestrator make it easy to manage all the EdgeConnect appliances LAN-to-WAN-to-LAN across almost 40 locations, but to see the traffic and understand the type of traffic going across those connections provides a lot of value in troubleshooting. If somebody thinks they're having a latency issue, we don't spend all our time looking at the application or server, we take a deeper dive into the traffic, which allows us to troubleshoot more quickly and effectively to deliver the performance and reliability our attorneys and clients demand."

Steele concludes, "With the Silver Peak SD-WAN, we have raised the bar on the performance, reliability, and security of our services. When we can provide the most efficient solutions for our attorneys, that helps them deliver more responsive service to our clients."

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

Customer

Fisher Phillips, LLP is one of the largest U.S. law firms representing management exclusively in the areas of labor, employment, civil rights, employee benefits, and immigration law. Founded in 1943 in Atlanta by I. Walter "Ike" Fisher, joined in 1949 by Erle Phillips, Fisher Phillips today has 37 offices and more than 450 attorneys in the U.S., as well as a network of local counsel on six continents able to serve clients with global operations.

Challenge

Fisher Phillips had a managed WAN with low-bandwidth MPLS circuits that were expensive and unreliable. The firm had frequent problems with dropped calls due to circuit brownouts, and one or more offices experienced downtime due to circuit outages each month, preventing attorneys from accessing critical applications like document management and e-discovery, which impacted the level of service provided to clients.

Solution

To improve resiliency and performance, Fisher Philips consulted with Silver Peak partner Veristor and deployed the EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform at nearly 40 locations, all in high-availability configurations and terminated with dual bonded broadband links. The firm decommissioned MPLS entirely. Fisher Phillips consolidated its edge infrastructure, retiring legacy routers and firewalls, relying on the routing interoperability and stateful zone-based firewall unified on the EdgeConnect platform. The firm uses Orchestrator to centrally manage the nationwide SD-WAN and create business intent overlays that prioritize each class of application to guarantee the required network resources based on business need.

Results

> Helps assure responsive client services by eliminating downtime due to circuit outages and brownouts, enabling reliable access to critical applications like document management

> Elevates quality of service for vital communication services like VoIP and video conferencing

> Streamlines access to SaaS applications like cloud-based document management and Microsoft Office 365

> Improves application performance and attorney efficiency by directing traffic to the nearest application instance in the cloud

> Enhances local network security with stateful zone-based firewall in EdgeConnect for local SaaS breakout and by routing all other traffic to regional security centers

> Improves network visibility and simplifies troubleshooting with centralized SD-WAN monitoring and orchestration

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