



Pharmaceutical solutions leader assures call center uptime and enhanced customer service with high-availability SD-WAN

TrialCard gains network stability, improves quality and reliability of business-critical VoIP services with Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN Edge Platform

Access to medication is one of the most critical aspects of assuring patient recovery and ongoing health. For many, however, affording needed medications can be challenging. That's where TrialCard comes in. In collaboration with pharmaceutical manufacturers, this technology-driven company provides services and solutions that enable patients to connect with the care and medications they need at greatly reduced cost, and in some cases, at no cost.

At the heart of the business is a network of call centers, which rely on continuous access to TrialCard's Cisco VoIP call management system running out of two geographically separated data centers. Agents must be logged in and at-the-ready to take calls at any moment. As Ryan Van Dynhoven, TrialCard's director of infrastructure, says, "Ensuring connectivity back to those data centers is our number one priority in IT."

trialcard®



ASSURED CALL
CENTER UPTIME



IMPROVED VOICE
RELIABILITY



INCREASED STAFF
PRODUCTIVITY

The problem was the company's telecommunication providers kept dropping connections, causing extended periods of downtime. Even with two high-bandwidth circuits from two separate providers, the problem was persistent, and manually failing over from one circuit to another took time.

Billy Vaughan, senior network engineer at TrialCard, explains, "Losing just two packets to one of our call centers would cause the connection to drop, which meant agents could be down for up to 15 minutes. We've had that happen more than once in a day."



The EdgeConnect appliances arrived on site right at the peak of when we were having carrier outages. As soon as EdgeConnect was deployed, the network was so stable, we were informed by senior management that we were not to remove it. They didn't want to risk any additional customer impact in order to test another vendor."

— Ryan Van Dynhoven, Director of Infrastructure, TrialCard Incorporated

Meets critical high-availability requirement for SD-WAN

From his experience at a previous company, Van Dynhoven saw SD-WAN as the solution, and brought in consulting firm, Opex Technologies, to evaluate SD-WAN vendors. Given the criticality of call center connectivity, a prime requirement was high

availability (HA), and the ability to handle traffic across both of TrialCard's 1-gigabit VPLS circuits, as well as a third cable broadband link in some locations.

Many of the contenders were ruled out immediately for either a lack of HA capabilities or because they couldn't handle the VPLS circuits. This narrowed the field to Silver Peak, proposed by partner [Sirius Computer Solutions](#), as well as CloudGenix and Cisco Viptela, each to be tested in that order. That plan changed, however, when the Silver Peak [Unity EdgeConnect™](#) SD-WAN edge platform was tested under live conditions at the company's largest call center.



Van Dynhoven recalls, "The EdgeConnect appliances arrived on site right at the peak of when we were having carrier outages. As soon as EdgeConnect was deployed, the network was so stable, we were informed by senior management that we were not to remove it. They didn't want to risk any additional customer impact in order to test another vendor."

Vaughan adds, "The HA capability Silver Peak brought really stood out. In a live test during business hours with agents actively handling calls, we failed one of the boxes. We just unplugged it, and still didn't drop any calls."

Assures high quality and stability for applications across the enterprise

The EdgeConnect platform is now deployed in HA configurations at all of TrialCard's call centers, business offices, and data centers spanning the

U.S., as well as external third-party processors in Europe. With SD-WAN overlays across both VPLS circuits, and in some cases a third cable broadband link, the call centers now have stable, high-quality connectivity to the Cisco voice system, as well as virtual desktops used for managing customer calls and processing orders through a host of internally developed applications running in the corporate data centers. Managers are also able to reliably connect to the TrialCard applications through Microsoft Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP), along with SaaS applications such as Salesforce and ServiceNow, with internet traffic routed through the company's Palo Alto Networks firewalls at the data centers.

To optimize performance and quality for the various applications, Van Dynhoven and his team used the [Unity Orchestrator™](#) management interface to configure business intent overlays. For example, the Cisco voice system is classified as "Real Time/High Quality" to ensure it gets top priority on the SD-WAN. Vaughan notes, "We used most of the pre-defined business intent overlays provided by Silver Peak, just adding things like Salesforce and Microsoft RDP to the Critical classification. Otherwise, Silver Peak nails it right out of the box."

Improved voice quality and reliability

Since deploying the EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform, downtime due to circuit outages has disappeared. The quality of voice calls is also assured. Vaughan notes, "Before, we had multiple instances of one-way audio, but not one since deploying EdgeConnect. When accessing the remote data center, people would often complain about sluggish application performance. But now, we don't get those complaints. Performance is very consistent whether they're accessing the local data center or the one across the country."

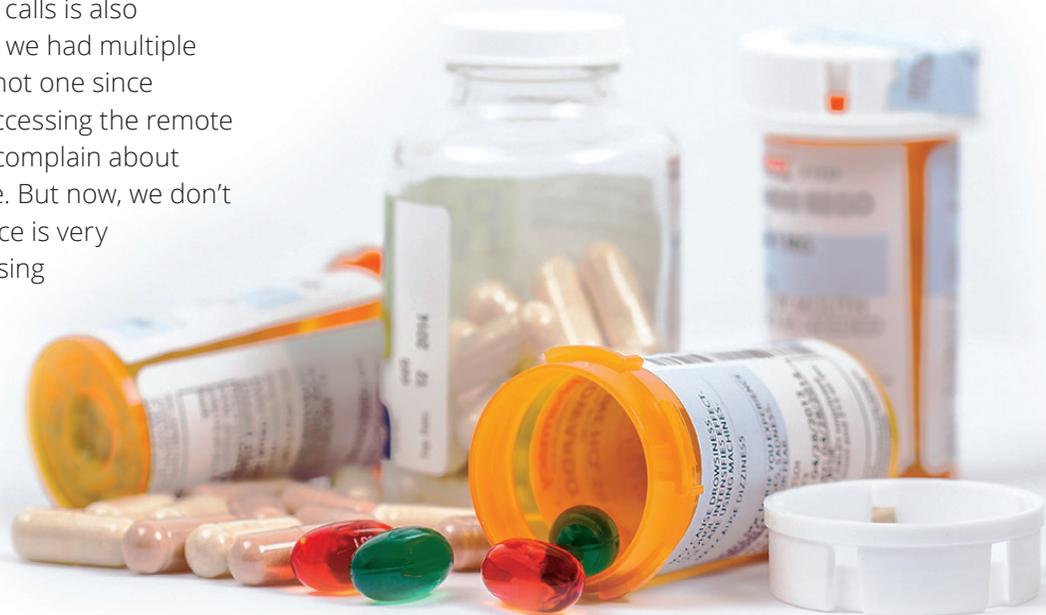
The IT team has also seen direct benefits from the EdgeConnect SD-WAN. For example, by retiring traditional WAN routers at

the edge and relying on the routing interoperability in EdgeConnect, the team greatly simplified routing management. Vaughan explains, "Because of the way our two data centers are stretched, we have very complex routing tables. Previously, we had to manage our own routes, and manually redirect every site if a link went down. Now we just point the local core switch to EdgeConnect and it handles everything. The underlying routing is still complex, but managing it is a lot simpler."

Key to simplifying SD-WAN management is the advanced visibility and control provided by Orchestrator. Van Dynhoven remarks, "Orchestrator allows us to really understand our traffic and easily make changes. It's also helpful for troubleshooting. If people start complaining about a problem with the call system, we can go to an individual IP address and check how traffic is going back and forth. That way we can quickly rule out the network and focus the application owners on the issue."

Perhaps the biggest benefit to IT is having more time back to spend on supporting the business rather than chasing after network problems. Vaughan underscores this point, concluding, "Before EdgeConnect I felt more like a fireman putting out fires every time something came up. Because we don't have issues from network outages anymore, it's nice to feel like an engineer again."

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



Customer

TrialCard Incorporated provides patient affordability, medication access and adherence, patient support, and clinical trial services on behalf of pharmaceutical manufacturers. Founded in 2000, TrialCard has connected over 30 million patients with nearly \$12 billion in branded drug savings to date. The company is headquartered in Morrisville, North Carolina.

Challenge

Frequent carrier outages were causing long periods of downtime for TrialCard's call centers—the core of the business—and impacting service to customers. Failing over from one carrier's circuit to another was a manual, complex process. The IT team also received complaints from call center agents about sluggish performance accessing applications and services in the company's remote data center. Moreover, the IT team lacked visibility into network traffic, making it difficult to identify the source of application problems.

Solution

TrialCard deployed the Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform in high availability configurations at all of its call centers, business offices, and data centers, as well as external third-party processors in Europe. The SD-WAN bonds two 1-gigabit VPLS circuits, and in certain locations, a third cable broadband link

to provide reliable, high-quality connectivity to the Cisco voice system and other in-house-developed business applications running in TrialCard's two data centers. Business intent overlays ensure that each application class gets the network resources needed to meet the business's performance and quality requirements. The IT team uses Unity Orchestrator for enterprise-wide SD-WAN observability and management.

Results

- Eliminates call center downtime due to circuit outages, improving customer service
- Delivers higher voice quality and reliability for business-critical call centers
- Improves application performance and stability, supporting higher productivity
- Enables call center agents to consistently deliver on customer service expectations
- Elevates end user quality of experience and satisfaction
- Simplifies routing management, freeing more IT time to focus on the business
- Streamlines application troubleshooting, accelerating problem resolution



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SP-ECS-TRIALCARD-022420