

A healthy customer experience

Accolade manages real-time data with SD-WAN



Accolade

accolade.com

- Personalized health and benefits solution provider for employers
- Advisors and clinical experts provide healthcare advocacy and support
- AI delivers personalized recommendations

40%

monthly cost reduction
versus the previous solution

Challenges

- Support fully remote workforce
- Secure access to cloud-based data and applications
- High bandwidth to handle large volumes of real-time data

Solutions

- Lumen® Dedicated Internet Access (DIA) provides connectivity for all applications
- Lumen® SD-WAN with Versa Networks handles optimal routing for real-time data
- Lumen® Managed Solutions for monitoring performance and traffic

Results

- Improved call quality and reliability
- Improved customer satisfaction
- 40% monthly cost reduction versus the previous solution

“The Lumen portal gives me a unique look at the WAN. It’s one pane of glass that lets me see it from the carrier’s perspective.”

— Erik Berta,
Network Architect and
Principal Cloud Engineer,
Accolade



Challenge

Routing real-time data to advisors helping clients

Many people receive health benefits through their employers. Yet, the vast majority of organizations are not actually in the business of health and wellness or equipped to help employees navigate the complex world of healthcare. Users often need guidance to understand their benefits and where to find medical assistance. Enter Accolade.

Accolade is a personalized health and benefits solution provider for employers. The company provides compassionate advisors, clinical experts, deep knowledge of the healthcare system and a technology platform, giving customers' employees a way to get the most out of their benefits. When an employee has questions about their plan, specific treatments, healthcare providers, or bills, they call Accolade.

Accolade's customer experience is produced by the combination of dedicated Accolade phone representatives, the data they access, and the underlying technologies that tie it all together. Accolade team members are remotely located throughout the nation, creating a large number of sites to connect. Home-based representatives need secure access to cloud-based data and applications and to Accolade's platform—while they counsel customers' employees via live phone calls. Accolade's cloud-based platform and their use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) provide the critical data needed for seamless member engagements.

"On average, about 75 percent of our network traffic is real-time data," said Erik Berta, Accolade network architect and principal cloud engineer.

Accolade previously used a dual-carrier MPLS architecture. As the company scaled, Berta wanted a more cost-effective solution that provided more flexibility without sacrificing the security of member health information or the real-time data traffic.

Solution

SD-WAN delivers enhanced traffic management and security

Accolade chose SD-WAN with Internet for the network topology. Berta looked at a wide range of providers. Some of them focused on edge caching to boost static data performance, but that did not address the tremendous need to manage the real-time data flow. Berta was already using Lumen as one of his MPLS vendors, so he turned to his contacts to discuss the new architecture.

"We met for a working session," Berta said. "We started with the end topology and requirements and worked back to the policies and programming. The architect's knowledge of the network implications of what we needed completely changed my mind from what I originally thought we needed."

The new solution is built on Lumen Dedicated Internet Access and Lumen SD-WAN with Versa Networks to all locations. DIA provides the advisor connectivity for all applications and the SD-WAN handles optimal routing for real-time data. That data includes voice or videoconference calls, appointment scheduling and the AI logic connecting client needs to the benefit options available to them.

For SD-WAN projects, Lumen experts perform the end-to-end programming. Berta monitors performance and traffic via the Versa self-service portal. The performance data helps Berta manage his relationships with various Internet suppliers around the nation.

Results and future plans

Improved performance, enhanced security and live data create happy customers

"We've seen an increase in call quality and call reliability," Berta said.

Accolade monitors calls for quality assurance and has documented increased speed of handling calls and — through analytics — has tracked increased customer satisfaction with their service. That increase in overall quality happened alongside a 40 percent monthly cost reduction versus the previous solution.

In the future, Berta will add more circuits as the business grows. A new data center in the middle of the nation might also be needed to maintain the consistency of application performance for advisors across the nation. He can now plan longer term strategies because of the reliability of his Lumen-managed network.