

Charter Business Case Study

Group Health Cooperative



Case Study

Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin (GHC-SCW) is a non-profit managed health care organization that provides insurance, primary care, and select specialty care services. The heart of GHC-SCW is its nationally ranked primary care clinics, which integrate with the insurance arm of the organization to provide quality care with value-added services.

Charter Business provides a fiber Ethernet WAN (wide-area network) with a 40Mbps connection to the clinics and interconnects with the University of Wisconsin Hospital.



"Worrying about our network reliability never keeps me up at night—which allows me to worry about other things!"

—Galen Metz,
Chief Information Officer

GHC-SCW uses 100Mbps to speed healing

The main uses of the GHC-SCW network is the interactive electronic medical record software system, Epic—which integrates practice management, patient interface, record sharing, and accounting interfaces to speed the process of provider-patient communication and insurance-administration processing. Being able to share large, complex files of diagnostic information and images quickly and reliably is critical. With 100Mbps download speed, GHC-SCW has the speed necessary to provide superb patient care, as well as confidence that the system won't slow down when it's needed.

Reliability is the cure for sleeplessness

In 2010, GHC-SCW experienced an overall system reliability of 99.97 percent. And this wasn't just a fluke; for the past four years, the lowest reliability they've experienced was one year at 99.96 percent. "Group Health Cooperative is known for our innovation with technology," said Galen Metz, Chief Information Officer at GHC-SCW. "In addition to being early adopters of electronic medical records, we have a robust intranet portal for patients, computer kiosks to check in for appointments, and we use smart phones extensively. The reliability of our Charter Business network makes this possible."

"Charter Business is even proactive, sending out emails to notify us about impending system maintenance so we are prepared," added David Stark, GHC-SCW Information Technology Manager.

Metz summarized it this way: "Worrying about our network reliability never keeps me up at night—which allows me to worry about other things!"

Incremental bandwidth provides flexibility

With different locations of GHC-SCW having different bandwidth needs, one of the reasons Charter Business is such a good fit is that bandwidth flexibility can be increased incrementally by as little as 10Mbps. "Many internet providers only offer a few speed options, none of which is typically exactly what you want or need," said Stark. "We know we will almost certainly need more bandwidth in the future, but with Charter Business we can easily add more at any time and therefore not have to pay for an increase until we actually need it."

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Good pricing keeps GHC-SCW slim and trim

Group Health Cooperative is a non-profit organization that doesn't have stockholders to raise money when needed. "We periodically run cost comparisons," noted Metz, "and in a survey of 80 healthcare companies GHC-SCW is extremely competitive on information systems cost. We operate on very slim margins, and Charter Business helps keep us lean."

Charter Business is a partner, not a vendor

Exemplary customer service is another reason GHC-SCW relies on Charter Business. "We feel like Charter Business is not just a vendor who wants to sell us something but a partner who recognizes the importance of what we are doing, and does everything they can to support us," said Metz.

That distinction was experienced early in their working relationship when Charter Business engineers met with the IT team at GHC-SCW to make sure they were implementing the technology that would most benefit GHC-SCW. "The initial meetings were extremely hands on," Stark recounted. "The Charter Business staff sat down with us, brought in all the diagrams, and took the time to explore various options as a team."

One of the results of this teamwork is that Charter Business makes it possible for GHC-SCW to manage their own VLANs (virtual local-area networks), which was not the case with their previous provider. "We have multiple firewalls set up throughout our network, and it's extremely helpful to be able to manage them ourselves," shared Stark. "I've worked with other providers who made me feel like we were at their mercy."

GHC-SCW recommends Charter Business: no second opinion needed

Both Dave Stark and Galen Metz have recommended Charter Business to other businesses who want a technology partner that will provide superb reliability at top speed for a good value. Metz summed it up: "When making service-provider decisions, it comes down to: Do the services work? Is the price right? If there's a problem or need, do they immediately respond? With Charter Business the answers are all 'yes.'"



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-Metz