

Pharmacies Improve Network Operations and Customer Satisfaction

Today's pharmacies offer an abundant array of medical and healthcare products, personal care items, household products, and photo processing services. Most drugstore chains also have online stores, and some even house medical clinics to treat common illnesses and minor injuries. In order to provide the best customer service, pharmacy retailers need a robust network that can support fast and secure credit card transactions, efficient back office systems, and today's high-bandwidth applications. In this competitive field, downtime is not an option. Here are just some of the ways that Hughes Managed Network Services have helped leading pharmacy chains serve their customers better.

High Availability Network Enhances the Customer Experience

One of the nation's top drugstore chains found that it was outgrowing its communications system. Bandwidth-hungry applications such as photo processing, videoconferencing, and third-party loyalty marketing programs were swamping the chain's network capacity across its retail operations—not to mention making it a struggle to provide suitable backup for each store. It was time for a new network design.

In addition to solving the bandwidth challenge, the retailer wanted a network that would ensure that security policies were tightly controlled while providing flexible, dynamic allocation of available bandwidth. The company needed to meet tough security regulations and protect its private network while enabling third-party applications to run over the same physical network.

Pulling It Together with a High Availability Network

Enter Hughes High Availability Network, a fully-managed service that enables the retailer to easily handle its growing communications requirements. Hughes High-Availability VPN combines the best of wireline, wireless and satellite technologies to deliver an integrated, fully-managed network with unmatched reliability and performance. The two



co-primary, always-on, diverse broadband connections to each pharmacy ensure the best application performance possible and that their mission-critical applications will continue to be available, even if one of the broadband connections is disrupted.

Today, the retailer's new High Availability Network delivers better performance and higher availability, and enables more advanced applications at its nearly 5,000 retail locations. The managed network integrates a variety of high-speed wireline technologies (T1, cable, DSL) with Hughes broadband satellite technology to support critical store systems, while also providing reliable, redundant backup protection so that no store suffers downtime.

Although the retailer contacted several vendors, Hughes was the only supplier that had the ability to tailor the network with the best broadband technology suited to each site, as well as provide affordable backup redundancy. In addition, Hughes met the retailer's security requirements while reducing its operating costs and improving the way the entire network is managed. Hughes is also embedding

features such as WAN acceleration, data compression, and policy-based routing to further boost broadband performance.

A New Shopping Experience

Today, the pharmacy retailer is using its Hughes High Availability Network not only to handle its mission-critical applications and processes—including superb prescription and photo processing services—but also to enhance the customer shopping experience. The flexible, highly available solution enables new interactive shopping capabilities, easier access to product information, more efficient prescription ordering, and the ability to take advantage of in-store and partner promotions—creating a smart drugstore model that caters to the needs of today’s savvy customer.

Meeting Burgeoning Pharmacy and Photo Service Demands

Meanwhile, another large pharmacy retailer needed to improve its network backup and upgrade its network to deliver rapid, reliable prescriptions and photo services to its customers. The MPLS solution that had initially met the retailer’s networking needs was creating new challenges in bandwidth, cost, and network backup, particularly as new applications were brought online.

The retailer’s pharmacy application, for example, required nearly 100 percent uptime and robust backup to reliably fill customer prescriptions. In addition, a new digital photo development application would require MPLS bandwidth expansion at considerable cost.

Internal studies indicated that each location would need at least 384 kbps to handle the new photo application.

That kind of cost increase multiplied across thousands of stores was a budget showstopper. Furthermore, it wouldn’t resolve the backup challenges.

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Availability, Flexibility, Resiliency

The retailer turned to Hughes Access Continuity to solve both its pharmacy backup and photo bandwidth challenges. Hughes Access Continuity is a fully-managed, secure, diverse wireless (3G or satellite) backup solution that completely bypasses primary landline connections and protects businesses from costly network outages.

Today, the retailer’s Access Continuity network service complements its existing MPLS network with broadband satellite technology, resulting in near 100 percent store/pharmacy availability. And the increased network bandwidth eliminated the need to upgrade the MPLS network. As a result, the retailer now enjoys enhanced performance and higher availability employing a dual path, route-diverse WAN—all while lowering overall networking costs.

In particular, the upgraded dual path WAN configuration provides extreme flexibility and resiliency for the company’s photo and pharmacy applications. This “network within a network” architecture delivers optimized performance while delivering the utmost in network availability. Using automatic failover, selected applications are dynamically re-routed to utilize the alternate transport. Using policy-based routing, the company is also able to prioritize pharmacy applications, allocating the necessary bandwidth for mission-critical applications, as well as leveraging backup capacity for lower-priority applications.

Getting an Edge on the Competition

Today, with the powerful capabilities of its Hughes Access Continuity service, the pharmacy retailer offers customers some of the most advanced pharmacy and photo development services in the country and has the required infrastructure to make sure it can satisfy customer prescriptions 24/7. With its Hughes Access Continuity Solution, the retailer enjoys enterprise-grade performance, availability, and reliability—delivering the edge it needs to stay ahead of the competition.



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