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Case Study: Gateway Healthcare, Inc.

Gateway Healthcare Secures Remote Access to Network with Atrion

Inexpensive Solution Lets Executives View Own Documents at Home, Provides Safety Net in Case of Pandemic or Natural Disaster

Imagine if you could tap into your office computer system anytime, anywhere and access all your documents and use all the applications your organization makes available to you. You wouldn't need to lug around a laptop or worry about saving and swapping files. You'd be working with your own documents, just as you would in your office.

Gateway Healthcare, Inc. decided it needed just that. Not only did Gateway want to give its executives and managers full access from home or elsewhere, but the organization also had to comply with Rhode Island's new requirements for pandemic planning.

Stephen DeRosa, VP of information systems and quality management, asked Atrion Networking Corporation, a systems integrator and network-services firm in Warwick, R.I., for help. The solution had to be easy to use and completely secure because the Gateway system contains confidential patient records. And it couldn't be a budget-buster. DeRosa has to stretch every IT dollar at Gateway, a nonprofit. Buying everyone laptops would be prohibitive—and it still wouldn't offer anything like a complete solution.

The Pawtucket, R.I.-based organization helps 14,900 Rhode Islanders a year recover from mental illness, substance abuse, and behavioral and emotional disorders. With 23 locations around the state, it provides services from around-the-clock psychiatric emergency care, to a school for troubled children, to a homeless shelter for families—to name just a few. It has 750 employees.





DeRosa and Richard Moul, Gateway's network specialist, thought about using Citrix, which would have cost a small fortune. So they asked Atrion Account Executive Miguel Ferreira to come up with an answer. Atrion had previously set up Gateway's Cisco Pix firewall and ran fiber-optic cable from Gateway's school to the data center and had done a great job.

"Miguel listened, which is not always common," DeRosa says.

Atrion's solution was elegant and simple. A company called Aventail makes a device that lets outside users access internal networks securely, using secure socket layer (SSL) technology to create a virtual private network (VPN). Installed in June 2006, the device cost \$12,000.

Atrion brought in Aventail's technician but didn't walk away. "Miguel stayed right there," he adds. "The two of them worked well together."

System Able to Expand Six-Fold in Emergency

The Aventail EX-1600 SSL VPN appliance lets up to 50 remote users concurrently get on Gateway's network. The solution includes a "surge license" that would accommodate 250 additional concurrent users for 90 days at no extra charge during an emergency. This would be invaluable if a flu pandemic broke out or a 21st - century version of the Hurricane of 1938 were to roar up Narragansett Bay. Though doctors, social workers and executives might not be able to get to the office, they'd still be able to work and serve their clients. "It's like an insurance policy," DeRosa says.

When a remote user attempts to connect, the Aventail system first checks the user's computer to make sure it has up-to-date anti-virus and anti-spyware software. If it doesn't, access is denied and the user is directed to a link to download the appropriate software.

Otherwise, the user simply logs on, using the same user name and password as in the office. The VPN uses the same active directory as the internal network, further boosting security. There's an instant menu of choices: my documents (Microsoft Word documents), email, the Gateway intranet and



Gateway's mainstay healthcare software from CMHC Systems. These applications run on different platforms, but the technology-agnostic Aventail system works equally well with all of them.

DeRosa says it's very easy to use. "If you can look up a book on Amazon, you can use this," he says.

Users, including Gateway's CEO, like the system and find it invaluable when working long hours to meet deadlines. They also have peace of mind that if a disaster did close the headquarters or one of the locations users could still get on the system and access all files and functions, including the Gateway intranet, which stores vital documents and procedures.

The Aventail system has had minimal impact on the overall system. Management of it is simple, and Moul can readily make any needed changes without outside help.

Unlike some vendors, Atrion is always responsive, DeRosa says. "When you need something, you need it, and they respond." Moul and DeRosa trust Atrion completely. "We feel comfortable with them," DeRosa says. Atrion could have used scare tactics to try to convince Gateway to spend more money than necessary. But they didn't. Ferreira even discouraged DeRosa and Moul from buying some add-ons that seemed appealing but weren't needed.

With some vendors, you're stuck with endless cycles of add-ons and additional services, but not with Atrion, which seems like Old Faithful, DeRosa says. "I've never been surprised with these guys," he says.