

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview on behalf of Qwest

Todd Panella

The Children's Hospital

IT Manager Desktop\Voice Services

Last updated: 2008 Sep 19



Product(s): GeoMax, Private Line: IR SST, QMOE: QC, SHNS
Industry: Healthcare

1. Business need

"Our major task for the project was to move our pediatric hospital from downtown Denver to Aurora. As a part of that, we also had to transition our 13 satellite offices to new connectivity to that new location. So that was really our business driver in moving forward with the project."

2. Evaluation & selection

"When looking for a telecom partner, we looked at a couple different things as far as criteria goes. One was flexibility of product; another was the ability to have that partnership attitude with a vendor; and the flexibility to make this move with us, as opposed to just providing us with some services. So we looked around at different players in the market, in the Denver area, and we looked at Level 3, we looked at ICG, but we didn't see the scope of products that Qwest was offering, and that's really why we went with Qwest. We were using Level 3 for part of our data center operations and we had a large relationship with Qwest, and we looked out there at what Level 3 could offer and we looked out there with what Qwest could offer. And we just felt that Qwest was a better choice for us as a business need, as well as technology. So Level 3 we really used as a data center model and not connectivity model, and because we were moving away from having an outsourced data center and into our new hospital data center, we felt like the best option for us was Qwest."

3. Why Qwest?

"Part of the reason why is the partnership attitude that we, as a hospital, like to take with our vendors. I think that it's important for the hospital to really get advice from a true professional in the business, and that being Qwest, I think it was important for us to come together and architect solutions in a true partnership and be able to work through those different models of how it is we want to do business, how it is we want to reach out to the community physicians, how it is that we want to reach out to community doctors who might not necessarily want to be in our one location; they want to have a small home office or a small office in general, that we can provide a solution for them. So that was part of the reason why we went with Qwest is that partnership attitude and ability to formulate those different solutions around connectivity."

I think the flexibility was the next thing--the flexibility of the solutions really allowed us to decide 'Hey, you know what? We're moving out to Aurora and we need to connect all these 15 or 16 sites and we need to have a backup solution for those sites because we are running our electronic medical record over those links.' And it was important for us to have the flexibility of using whatever technology is out there to do the connectivity."

Additionally, I think a one vendor solution really helps us out in both the management and accountability. From an accountability standpoint, we have the ability to go to one vendor for all of our solution, which allows us to put accountability on Qwest, as well as get preferred pricing from Qwest. So that was I think the third reason why we really wanted to use Qwest."

4. The implementation/installation

"The initial driver for us to do the QMOE project in general, and any project related to The Children's Hospital within the last year, was the hospital move. We first started in April of '06 with Qwest to help us architect the solution of how we were going to move the hospital, and it lasted--the project in general lasted approximately six

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months, and there was some real heroic efforts from the account teams, from the provisioning teams, from the project teams to allow us to really connect the hospital in a way that was seamless to the end user as far as how we moved the data center. We moved the data center in six to eight moves, and the ability for us to do that was because of the solutions that Qwest put in over those four to six months.

Notable items from the implementation were the ability for us to get our GeoMax product up and running in a timely manner because our data center move was so compressed, and we escalated that time frame, I think, around two months.

We asked our account representative, along with the account team and the project team behind it, to really make that date of sometime in February, and we put some pressure on them. And I think that's why I say that it was a heroic effort by the account teams--because without them, we couldn't have moved the hospital. Not in a timely manner, not when our CEO wanted us to move it by.

So another effort that we had was to get all the satellite offices that we had currently hooked up to T1s and DS3s moved over to QMOE by a certain date, and I think that date was mainly driven by the voice system that we were putting in; we were putting in a new voice over IP system that we had to have switched over to the new hospital data center prior to us moving to it. So once again, we really put some pressure on the account teams to make those satellites happen in a timely manner so that we were able to move in October."

5. Overview of solution

"The products we use from Qwest are GeoMax; QMOE; SST/OC3, which we have muxed DX3s off of, we've got private line T1s off of; we also use the iQ Internet access product for our primary Internet access; and we use Voice PRIs, approximately 15 of them now, for our voice solution that we have at the new hospital.

We also use Host DSL product for backup to our existing network of care locations, which are our satellites, and for our small home office solution. We have approximately 45 nurses that work from home on this solution and it works very well for us. In addition to that, we also use Qwest professional services to do fiber trenching, fiber installation, conduit, and the like to help us put the QMOE product in our different locations.

At our Marion Street location, which was our old data center that we moved from, we have turned that location into a true disaster recovery site. And not only does GeoMax help us by being connected to that site so that we can do data replication over the GeoMax links, but we also have redundancy with our voice system out of that location along with our Host DSL product to all of our different satellite locations. So if the QMOE goes down, we have a solution in place where the data and the voice will traverse the Host DSL product so that we can failover to that location."

6. Business/IT environment

"So The Children's Hospital new Fitzsimmons campus location has three main buildings, which is our large ambulatory pavilion and inpatient pavilion, as well as our admin pavilion and our psych pavilion or behavioral health pavilion, and those locations sit on a footprint that's three times as large as our old location, so it's a pretty expansive move that we did. In addition to those locations, we have our Marion data center, which is literally our old data center that is downtown. So we have two head-ends to our network, and from there we have approximately 13-plus satellite locations that we have connectivity to that perform different outpatient models, physical therapy, occupational therapy--things like that. So we've got 13-plus locations around the Denver metro area and then we have one location in Pueblo. We also are using some of Qwest's solutions to help us with the small home office model and an office model just in general for physicians."

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7. Customer service

"From a customer service perspective, I think the partnership attitude that we've formed with Qwest has been exceptional. I think that the pressure that we've put on the account teams, as well as the project teams, to implement has been pretty great and they've really done an excellent job in communicating with us what their constraints are, and that's very important for customer service in what I think is a good customer service model. So overall, you know, the customer service has been exceptional from my standpoint. I think that there are some issues with billing, there are some issues with how accounts are set up, but other than that, I think from a customer perspective I'm very happy, and I think Children's, in general, is very happy with the level of service that Qwest has provided us."

8. Non-financial benefits

"The non-financial benefits that we've really seen from a project perspective, as well as a hospital move perspective, are the ability for us to have more bandwidth at the sites, a more flexible way of implementing new sites. As far as the new bandwidth at the sites goes, we do a lot of our electronic medical record work over the QMOE links, and because of that, we've had in the past with T1s where it was very slow and the response time was not enough for the doctors and the nurses to get medications, be able to chart, do things that are a part of their daily job. With the improvement of QMOE, I think that they're able to really work more effectively and efficiently with the electronic medical record.

Also, the QMOE links have really allowed us to look at new technologies, such as video conferencing, where a physician can be in one of our satellite locations and go through what we call 'ground rounds', which are our centralized rounds at our new facilities with all the chief of surgery, all the medical directors, so that that physician can get a hands-on look into what's going on at the central location.

All these services that we have to offer now have translated directly into patient care, and improved patient care, really. The ability for them to get with the patient sooner after they chart, or during them charting, is really important for the patient to have very quick service--quick medical service obviously, as well as customer service."

9. Measurable benefits

"Our anticipated benefits that we're seeing or that we want to see are things like total cost of ownership decrease--so the ability for us to have one data center in one location has been significant for us. We've reduced our data center bills by 80,000 dollars a month, which has been a huge win for us in the IT team, as well as unseen benefits--like out west we have our facility that does PACS imaging, and the ability for them to do real-time imaging with the hospital so that doctors at the hospital, as well as doctors out west, can consult together on what might be a diagnosis for a child. And that's been a huge win for us because it improves patient care, it improves the ability to, you know, provide service for the doctor.

Another anticipated benefit that we're looking forward to is the reduced amount of product that we use from Qwest so that our bills are less, our total management solution is less. We've been able to consolidate a lot of our services into like systems as opposed to disparate systems, which is good for IT management; it allows operations to know that we have QMOE at every location as opposed to T1s and DS3s and whatever else product that we have. But that has been a win for us on the IT side because it allows our management structure to reduce."

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10. Areas for improvement

"One of the things that we saw when we rolled out our St. Joe's location, which was our replacement location downtown for the kids to come to--it was part of our agreement with Denver to have that location--so it was a major effort to get that site up and running, and it was very important for us to have that site right from the onset. Unfortunately, what had happened was there was some miscommunication, I think, and we implemented a product, copper QMOE, as opposed to fiber QMOE, that I think really Qwest rolled out a bit too early. It was--it was solid to a point, but every once in a while we would have degraded service, and that degraded service would translate into dropped sessions from our electronic medical record as well as our phone system. So one of the things that we had had happen was we had a patient in and the nurse was trying to take care of this patient, trying to look up the amount of drugs that they were supposed to push to the patient for that given period, and unfortunately wasn't able to come up with what the electronic medical record recommended based on previous visits. So they had to go as far as calling a doc and going through their downtime reports to see really what they needed to push to that patient, and it was about a half an hour between the ability for them to look up that medication to pushing it to the patient, and that's really not what we want to do as a hospital or as--a customer service perspective or a patient safety perspective. So what Qwest did to correct that situation was review it with us, and we looked at replacing the service with fiber as opposed to going with the copper services, and really, really pushed hard on the account team to make that happen. They did an excellent job of getting it pushed through and coming up with an alternative solution while we implemented fiber QMOE there. They came up with two T1s that day, the day that we had the issues--so for us, it was, I thought, a win from a customer service perspective from Qwest, but also--you know, looking back on it, I don't think I would have rolled that service out quite as quickly as Qwest did. So that's one of the areas of improvement--just be careful of what you're rolling out before you roll it out.

The second area of improvement that I see is problem communication. One of the issues that we're having is the ability for Qwest to communicate with our technologists on our side when there is a problem occurring. We get a call from Qwest, and sometimes it's a call from a different group, and what we'd like to see is a centralized problem management process put in place from Qwest. Instead of the QMOE team calling or the T1 tester calling or the DS3 team calling, we'd like one team to call us and talk through issues with us as opposed to four or five or six disparate groups that have those issues--that bring those issues to us.

In addition to that, I think that proactive monitoring might be a small issue. We do have fairly decent proactive monitoring by Qwest, but much like the problem communication, it happens across too many groups, and it would be nice to see one group monitoring The Children's Hospital--so a dedicated monitoring group."

11. Future plans

"The future really looks bright for Children's and Qwest in the sense that we're building two new locations right now; we're building a south surgery center, in which we're going to put fiber QMOE into, as well as our north campus, which is a fairly large buildout, and we're going to be doing fiber QMOE to that location as well. So those efforts are gonna happen within the next year. Two years down the line, or two to five-year outlook, we're looking to expand more into the Denver metro area; we're looking to build a south super center much like our north campus. We're also looking to expand more in Colorado Springs, into Pueblo, and into the West region; maybe a Glenwood Springs or an Aspen or a Dillon or something to that extent. And we'd be looking to Qwest to help us with that expansion."

12. Recommendations and advice

"Prior to doing this project again, if I were to look back on one of the key areas for improvement that we could have done is involve our Qwest team sooner and really have that ability to plan with the team. We put a lot of pressure on them that, I think, was undue pressure to a point. I think if we would have gotten ahead of time--or

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ahead of the project a little bit more and done a lot more planning, I think the implementation would've been even more successful than it already was."



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