

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview on behalf of Qwest

Haig Rudd

Dixon Hughes

Manager, Technology Solutions

Last updated: 2008 Jun 19



Product(s): iQ: Internet Port, ISDN Primary Rate, LD: Dedicated
Industry: Accounting

1. Business need

"My firm sends and receives a very large volume of e-mail on any given day; the Internet is our connection to the rest of the world. Our CPAs use e-mail, in some cases, as a primary communications method with their clients; in that way, Internet access is absolutely critical.

Other things--we are a CPA firm, so we use the Internet for electronic tax filings; that happens more than once a year, so Internet availability is critical for being able to electronically file tax returns and other reports. We needed a super-reliable dedicated Internet solution that was available in all of the locations where we do business.

We do business in several different states and approximately 25 individual cities at this point. We needed this to be a single-vendor--and cost was an issue, but not a primary concern for us in this project.

If we had continued with our legacy solution setup, we would have had limited opportunities for growth and our expenses would have been greater. We had run out of capacity and any further growth, any effort to centralize services in our two data centers, would have been hampered by the insufficient bandwidth of our legacy network."

2. Evaluation & selection

"We have two wide area network connections in each one of our offices, so we needed to choose two separate vendors for wide area network connections, and our criteria for choosing the two were the same: We needed a provider with a demonstrated track record of high reliability; we needed to have prompt, predictable, professional service in the event of an outage or problem--and cost was an issue.

We requested uptime statistics and service level agreement statistics from all of the vendors that we chose for our short list, and then we evaluated that. The reliability and the service level agreement were our primary criteria; then after that, we evaluated projected costs and we evaluated the service options based on talking to customers of Qwest and the other four vendors that we considered."

3. Why Qwest?

"We liked the demonstrated reliability of the Qwest network; that was the single greatest factor for us in choosing Qwest. Universal availability motivated us also--the fact that we could choose one vendor for the dedicated IP Internet access in every office in our enterprise.

Also, we purchase a relatively large number of voice services from Qwest in addition to the dedicated Internet access, and we were able to leverage our volume to drive our prices down."

4. The implementation/installation

"Qwest assigned a dedicated project manager to our project team that was very communicative, very professional. All of the sites were installed and turned up on time and the Qwest operations people were highly available to our network people when we went to actually turn up a site.



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When we went to connect our CPE to the Qwest link at an office, we were very pleased with the results we got when we actually went to activate the service.

They actually finished ahead of schedule. We were a little conservative in dictating our time frame; we had a relatively large number of sites to turn up and we were a little conservative and had estimated that we could do about six sites per week, but the project ended up going much more smoothly and much more quickly than we expected it to. We turned up approximately 30 sites on the Qwest IP network. The geography was regional--Southeast--and we finished ahead of schedule."

5. Overview of solution

"We subscribe to Qwest IP networking in approximately 30 sites all over the Southeast. We have at least a single T1 in each of those sites; most sites have multiple T1s that Qwest multiplexes for us. In two sites, we have fractional DS3 connections that provide high-speed access to the Internet.

In addition to the Internet access we acquire from Qwest, we also have decided that Qwest will be our standard long-distance vendor throughout the firm, so every PRI circuit, every DID, every POTS line, every long-distance T1 is acquired through Qwest, and all of our long-distance billing is consolidated under one Qwest account."

6. Customer service

"In the six months that we have had Internet service through Qwest, we have not experienced any downtime or any other technical issues, so unfortunately I can't speak a lot about the customer service or the problem resolution--but I'm ecstatic about the results that we've had.

In addition, we have always found the Qwest customer service people on the voice side to be very responsive, thorough, and professional. The very few issues that we've had on the voice side have always been resolved quickly and professionally."

7. Experience with Qwest Control®

"I've not personally used it, but I've seen some reports from the Qwest Control Statistics Manager. I can say that we have used the Statistics Manager to look at our typical bandwidth utilization in all of our offices and identify some offices where we were able to scale back our bandwidth a little bit and some offices where we needed to increase our bandwidth a little bit. So it is nice to have a tool with which we can monitor our utilization and adjust our services appropriately."

8. Non-financial benefits

"I worry much less about my Internet access now. I've found the Qwest network to be extremely reliable. Our business grows pretty rapidly. Our head count is about twice today what it was when I signed on 3 1/2 years ago and we project for it to continue to grow in that way. The fact that I can rapidly provision Qwest Internet services in any of my existing or new offices enables me to deploy technology services to a new office very rapidly and very efficiently. The Qwest Internet connection has become part of our standard office configuration, so any new offices that we acquire through merger or acquisition or organic growth will have Qwest dedicated IP services.

Our ability to consolidate all of our Internet access and long distance billing under a single vendor has reduced administrative overhead on the accounts payable side."



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9. Measurable benefits

"We've been able to use our volume to save somewhere between 10 percent and 15 percent on our Internet access across the firm. We were able to reduce our costs and increase our bandwidth in all of our offices. In some offices, we have doubled our available Internet bandwidth. Being able to increase our bandwidth in these offices has allowed us to centralize more services in our data centers. We've been able to consolidate some servers, services, and applications that a year ago were deployed in every office into our central data centers. The fact that we now have reliable high-speed, redundant access to those data centers gives us the confidence to centralize more resources moving forward.

In addition, my telecom team has spent less time on the phone troubleshooting inoperable Internet connections than they did before."

10. Areas for improvement

"Really, we have had an entirely positive experience with Qwest so far. We work with a whole lot of different telecom vendors and I'm trying to consolidate that down to the smallest number I possibly can, and Qwest will be on that short list. So if anything, I would say that Qwest is one of the two telecom vendors that we have the absolute fewest problems with."

11. Future plans

"In the next 6 to 12 months, as we add offices, we will make the Qwest iQ service part of our standard office configuration--so any new offices will get at least a single T1 from the Qwest network as part of the standard configuration. We'll continue to evaluate our bandwidth utilization in the existing offices and we will add and subtract and otherwise adjust our services appropriately."

12. Recommendations and advice

"I would advise anyone considering an Internet vendor to look at the demonstrated reliability of the underlying network--that was the most important factor for us. At this point, anybody can give you an Internet connection, and I would advise anyone looking to buy Internet access to go with a vendor that can serve them in all of their locations, that has a demonstrated record of high availability."