



QWEST SOLUTIONS FEATURING:

Qwest iQ Networking® Private Port

Case Study: **Vantage**
Oncology

Qwest
BUSINESS

VANTAGE ONCOLOGY, INC.

CUSTOMER:

Vantage Oncology, Inc.
www.vantageoncology.com

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

With multiple Vantage Oncology locations and more planned, the company's network was quickly becoming unmanageable because of a complex legacy system. Vantage Oncology looked to partner with a tier-one provider to help the company avoid this impasse and manage growth effectively.

SOLUTION:

Vantage Oncology evaluated four potential vendors and chose multi-protocol label switching (MPLS)-based Qwest iQ Networking® Private Port service for its 24 centers across the U.S. In addition, Qwest provided a wide range of Cisco® equipment for the centers and for the corporate location in California.

BENEFITS AND RESULTS:

- Ensures network scalability to support continued company growth
- Nationwide service availability and rapid implementation shorten time to revenue for new centers
- Productivity of high-value physician staff is optimized, saving approximately \$800,000 dollars a year in head count
- Enables company to manage a larger network with a smaller number of IT people
- Users have expressed satisfaction with the excellent performance of the low-latency, low-packet-loss network
- Network architecture provides control to support compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Based in El Segundo, California, Vantage Oncology provides state-of-the-art cancer treatment with a specialty in radiation therapy. Since 2002, the company has focused on developing, acquiring, managing and operating radiation oncology centers and has a growing presence with multiple locations across the U.S.

FACING THE CHALLENGES

Vantage Oncology has been growing at a rate of approximately six new centers a year, and the ability to manage network growth is mission-critical because of this ongoing expansion, according to Eric Erickson, Director of Information Technologies at Vantage Oncology.

"Our legacy solution complicated things to the point that it would have become unmanageable in a very short period of time," Erickson said. "Sometimes our growth pattern is sporadic; we'll have nothing for a period of time, and then a few months later we'll have three or four centers go at one time. That's when the manageability and scalability aspects really come into play. If I don't have a key partner, it becomes very unwieldy," he said.

Finding a provider with coverage across the U.S. was very important because of Vantage's nationwide locations. A solid network backbone and reliable network performance were other criteria that led Erickson and his team to focus their search on tier-one providers and eventually choose Qwest.



PROVIDING A SUCCESSFUL SOLUTION

Erickson said that he was originally referred to Qwest by a peer. "And they didn't steer me wrong," he stated. "Qwest is a leader in MPLS-based networks, and that was a strong criterion for us when we selected Qwest iQ Networking® Private Port service," he emphasized.

Previously, each Vantage center had a direct connection to the Internet. "Each of these direct connections was essentially a port out to

“Qwest customer service is outstanding, and that influenced our choice of Qwest iQ Networking Private Port service. Qwest service has been five-star, 10 out of 10, on every level from Qwest CSRs to corporate management.”

—Eric Erickson, Director of Information Technologies

the world, and that was very difficult to secure,” Erickson said. “With Qwest iQ Networking Private Port service, we’ve been able to narrow it down to a couple of entry points that we can secure and monitor effectively,” he said.

“If an organization plans well and both sides agree upon the plan, you would expect the implementation to go well—and with Qwest that’s certainly the case,” Erickson noted. “But something that I think speaks volumes about an organization is how it responds when there are issues—and that’s when Qwest shines. If there’s a problem, you communicate with Qwest, and the Qwest team responds with their action plan and expected resolution,” Erickson explained.

“Qwest met all of our primary needs, including coverage, bandwidth and backbone. But with any provider, you still have the secondary piece, which is the account management team, and Qwest’s team is just fantastic,” Erickson said.

“Qwest has people on staff who know the business. Data, voice—whatever the solution you’re looking for—Qwest has someone who knows how to do it or can give you insight to solve a particular issue,” Erickson noted.

Vantage Oncology currently has 24 locations and all of them are using Qwest iQ Networking Private Port service. “I’m a Cisco CCNA [Cisco certified network associate], so all of our infrastructure is Cisco, and Qwest has provided Cisco-based equipment,” Erickson said.

“Not only our CPE (customer premises equipment) but also Cisco hardware for the centers, for our switches, and corporate location: we’ve purchased it all through Qwest,” he added.

DELIVERING RESULTS

As in any health-care organization, medical physicists are a high-cost and high-value resource at Vantage Oncology. “Without this network and infrastructure, we would need twice as many physicists. So this technology is saving us approximately \$800,000 dollars a year in physics staff costs,” Erickson said.

HIPAA compliance is another benefit of the Qwest MPLS-based network according to Erickson. “The multiple entry points from all of our DIA circuits were a security problem,” he explained. “With a private port network, we can fine tune what people can access, to benefit both productivity and security and help us comply with HIPAA,” Erickson stated.

Center managers have noticed that the new system is smoother, according to Erickson. “For example, previously, there were significant issues with disconnects, and now that has gone away. I can attribute the improvements to clean bandwidth, low latency, and all of the other attributes of the Qwest MPLS-based service.” he said.

EFFICIENT DATA ACCESS

“We have a centralized billing office in California, but as our company’s grown, we opened a second one on the East Coast. They access the same servers, the same databases, and all this is possible because of the Qwest MPLS network,” Erickson said.

IT REQUIREMENTS SIMPLIFIED

“We have a very small help desk, but because all of our sites are interconnected now, we’re able to manage a larger network and keep things running effectively with a smaller number of IT people,” Erickson said.

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EXCELLENT NETWORK PERFORMANCE

"The images we transfer can range from 30 to 150MB to triple that size, and we need bandwidth that's rock solid without fluctuations. What we've experienced with Qwest is excellent network performance," Erickson said.

SCALABILITY SUPPORTS GROWTH

"The Qwest MPLS-based network is robust enough to scale with us as we need new technology and applications. Qwest iQ Networking® Private Port service really fits our needs for future growth," Erickson said.

SHORTENED TIME TO REVENUE

"Our company basically grows through two mechanisms; we build new centers or we acquire existing centers and bring them to our standards. Once the agreement's signed, the first thing that's ordered is the Qwest MPLS circuit. We have not had a center yet where we couldn't get a T-1 very rapidly, and this has shortened our time to revenue," Erickson said.

QWEST SPIRIT OF SERVICE IN ACTION®

"With Qwest, everything I need is accomplished with a minimal number of phone calls and e-mails. They stay engaged and they communicate effectively; I just can't say enough about that aspect of dealing with Qwest," Erickson said.

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