

# Creating a healthy customer experience

with SD-WAN

## Overview

Many people receive health benefits through their employers. Yet, the vast majority of organizations are not actually in the business of health and wellness, nor are they necessarily equipped to help employees navigate the complex world of healthcare. Healthcare plans are sometimes confusing and users often need guidance to help understand their benefits and where to find medical assistance. Enter Accolade.

Accolade is a personalized health and benefits solution provider for employers. The company provides compassionate advisors, clinical experts, deep knowledge of the healthcare system and a technology platform, giving customers' employees a way to get the most out of their benefits. When an employee has questions about their plan, specific treatments, healthcare providers, or bills, they call Accolade.

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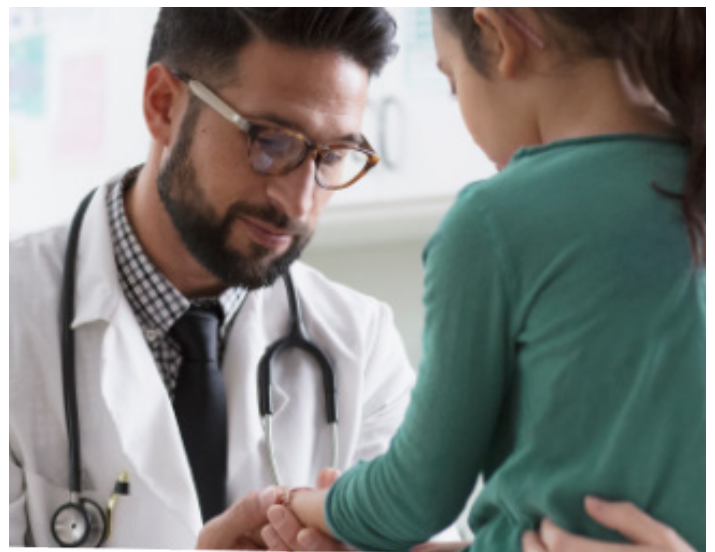
– Erik Berta, Network Architect and Principal Cloud Engineer, Accolade



**Industry**  
Healthcare

**Challenge**  
Increasing network flexibility and security while controlling costs and ensuring great customer experience

**Solution**  
SD-WAN improves data quality and network reliability



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## Challenge

### Routing real-time data to Accolade advisors to help clients

Accolade stands out from the competition for the customer experience it delivers, which is produced by the combination of dedicated Accolade phone representatives, the data they have access to, and the underlying technologies that tie it all together. Accolade team members are remotely located throughout the nation, creating a large number of sites to connect. Home-based representatives need access to cloud-based data and applications and to Accolade's platform — while they counsel customers' employees via live phone calls. Accolade's cloud-based platform and their use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) provide their team the critical data needed for seamless member engagements.

"On average, about 75 percent of our network traffic is realtime data," said Erik Berta, Accolade network architect and principal cloud engineer. Accolade previously used a dual-carrier MPLS architecture. As the company scaled, Berta wanted a more cost-effective solution that provided more flexibility. Additionally, any new architecture had to protect the security of member health information and deliver that real-time data traffic.

## Solution

### SD-WAN delivers enhanced traffic management and security

Accolade decided on an SD-WAN strategy with Internet for the network topology. Berta looked at a wide range of providers. Some of them focused on edge caching to boost static data performance, but that did not address the tremendous need to manage the real-time data flow. Berta was already using Lumen as one of his MPLS vendors, so he turned to his contacts to discuss the new architecture.

"We met for a working session," Berta said. "We started with the end topology and requirements and worked back to the policies and programming. The Lumen architect's knowledge of the network implications of what we needed completely changed my mind from what I originally thought we needed."

The new solution is built on Lumen® Dedicated Internet Access (DIA) and Lumen SD-WAN with Versa Networks to all locations. DIA provides the advisor connectivity for all applications and the SD-WAN policy setting handles optimal routing for real-time data. That data includes voice or videoconference calls, appointment scheduling and the AI logic connecting employee symptoms to treatment options. The managed solution frees up Berta from worrying about the details of circuits and troubleshooting. Berta worked with his architectural team to set policies and still maintains control of his network through the Lumen portal. Lumen experts did the end-to-end programming.

While Lumen manages the SD-WAN, Berta monitors performance and traffic via the self-service portal that comes with the Versa platform. The performance data helps Berta manage his relationships with various broadband suppliers around the nation.

"The Lumen portal gives me a unique look at the WAN," Berta said. "It's one pane of glass that lets me see it from the carrier's perspective."

## Results and future plans

### Improved performance, enhanced security and live data creates happy customers

"We've seen an increase in call quality and call reliability," Berta said.

Accolade monitors calls for quality assurance and has documented increased speed of handling calls and — through analytics — has tracked increased customer satisfaction with their service. That increase in overall quality happened alongside a 40 percent monthly cost reduction versus the previous solution.

In the future, Berta will add more circuits as the business grows. A new data center in the middle of the nation might also be needed to maintain the consistency of application performance for advisors across the nation. He can now plan longer term strategies because of the reliability of his Lumen-managed network.