PARDA Federal Credit Union

Industry

Banking

Locations

Ten locations in
MI, SC, PA, CT and IL

Founded

1937

By the Numbers

More than $170 million
in assets and over 17,000
members nationwide

Cool Fact

PARDA's first till was a cigar box

Website

www.parda.com

Ecessa Product

WANworX®

The Company

PARDA Federal Credit Union understands that best-in-class customer service reinforces member loyalty. That is why, since 1937, PARDA has capitalized on leading edge technologies to enhance its services. Today, PARDA enables members to interact with their credit union like never before, in person and online, using the latest financial technologies with secure, resilient connectivity.

The Challenge

To achieve that, Anthony Steffens, Chief Information Officer at PARDA, needed to upgrade the organization's network to take advantage of advanced software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) functionality. "Our old MPLS was very slow and very expensive," said Steffens. "The performance was terrible, with high latency."

PARDA's branch locations depend on connectivity to the member solution center in Auburn Hills, Michigan, for virtual desktop connections and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calling. High latency creates enormous problems for those types of real-time applications, resulting in dropped calls and slow application response times.

"I was aware of SD-WAN and wanted to deploy a full mesh network among our locations," said Steffens. "The Ecessa solution was recommended to us. But I was skeptical. I've been managing IT for over 20 years and there's usually an element that isn't true."

The Solution

Steffens talked to the Ecessa sales and engineering teams to find out what the solution would and would not do. Steffens continued, "They took me through a good, solid demo showing exactly how it worked. I like that the web interface is not overly complicated. And they explained the product roadmap. I appreciate that level of transparency, as well as Ecessa's commitment to advancing technology."

Steffens filled out pre-configuration worksheets, which included all the information needed to configure and deploy the units. Based on the worksheets and in collaboration with Steffens, Ecessa's engineers created a plan for deployment that included network diagrams, configuration files and a schedule. "We had good, quick, intelligent conversations with Ecessa," said Steffens. "Based on that, installing the units was straightforward."

Ecessa helped Steffens deploy the first two sites. Because of the initial planning and training work PARDA did with Ecessa, they were able to figure out the remaining deployments on their own.

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The Benefits

PARDA uses their Ecessa SD-WAN products for failover and to proactively prevent congestion. "I would recommend Ecessa to other credit unions because it works. It simply works," said Steffens. PARDA's network is always optimized with granular traffic shaping and prioritization. Calls no longer drop and applications are always accessible for staff and members.

One branch had intermittent connectivity issues with a circuit for a month. "The line kept going down and the carrier couldn't get a fix to stick," Steffens recounted. "The good news is, the staff at the branch didn't even know there was a problem." Because of the Ecessa load balancing and automatic failover, Steffens didn't get a single call about it.

Another win for IT was when PARDA installed IP cameras at several branches. That data instantly bogged down the primary MPLS circuits, but Steffens was able to quickly configure static routes to send that specific traffic over broadband connections and free up the MPLS.

Cost savings is another benefit of switching to SD-WAN with Ecessa. PARDA eliminated their expensive 1.5 Mbps MPLS network. Instead, they provisioned 10 Mbps fiber at all branches plus broadband secondary connections, and upgraded to 50 Mbps fiber at headquarters. They duplicate traffic to ensure Never Down® reliability. They deployed SD-WAN at their disaster recovery site, too. The result is a resilient, faster network with lower latency.

That particular network transition was the easiest Steffens has ever done. "We did the testing and executed the cutover with zero impact to our staff or members. It took ten minutes." With no disruption to services and faster access to applications, nobody at the branches realized the network had undergone a major change until the IT team told them.

PARDA also saves thousands of dollars a year by using Ecessa's built-in firewalls at the edge for guest WiFi, along with their enterprise next generation firewall at headquarters. There are more features the company plans to implement going forward, like leveraging Ecessa virtual instances to support O365.

What keeps Steffens a satisfied Ecessa customer is his real experience with Ecessa's customer service. "Any company can say its support is the best in the industry, whether or not customers think so. Because it's overhyped, a lot of people underestimate the value of true customer service excellence. If you call in and they can't answer your question, that's a problem. Ecessa always answers our questions," said Steffens. "They don't pass you around to various tiers of support. You call, you get the expert, they take care of you. That's true customer service excellence. Ecessa's support team is always there for us."

Visit www.ecessa.com for more success stories.

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