

Case Study Emirates Healthcare Limited

Executive Summary

Super-fast, high-availability and cost-effective communications services are the backbone of EHL's business and the company calls on du for fixed Internet, Wifi and bulk IPTV, and the support of its fully redundant MPLS network. With an eye on the future and the emergence of datacomms-based telehealth services, it also expects managed video to eventually play a vital role in patient care across its estate of hospital and clinics.



EHL in the best of health:

Looking to the future potential of datacomms

High-speed data communications are vital for every business, but for healthcare supplier EHL it could be described as being a matter of life or death.

"We are totally reliant on data communications for the smooth running of our two hospitals and the eight clinics we have across Dubai. We can't do anything without super-fast, high-availability and cost-effective communications services," explains Cules Schoeman, Group Manager for Information Technology.

EHL is majority owned by Medi-Clinic, one of the top ten listed hospital groups in the world. Along with 54 hospitals in South Africa, Medi-Clinic also owns the largest private hospital group in Switzerland, Hirslanden. EHL's other shareholders are the Dubai-based Varkey Group and General Electric. The company has established a culture of quality that permeates every aspect of its business: starting with the empathy of its front-of-house and nursing staffs, the high standards of its facilities all the way through to the meticulous maintenance of its world-class technology assets.

Similarly, the EHL IT team is passionate about the delivery of quality support services to its clients. Schoeman notes that the mandate set for his team is to continuously strive to do the right thing right, the first time around – and to provide the very best possible service.

He explains that du provides the company with a full range of services. "EHL likes to partner with the very best providers; we strive to build strategic long-lasting business partnerships."

Currently the services provided by du covers the delivery of fixed Internet, Wifi and bulk IPTV, and the support of a fully redundant MPLS network which provides the channel for information flows between the EHL data centres, its hospitals and clinics.

MPLS is accepted across industry as a technology that provides better reliability and increased performance over alternatives, and Schoeman describes it as essential to the smooth running of his operation. From specialist radiology units, to pharmacy, laboratory information and back-office hospital information systems, it is effectively the backbone of the business.

"It's true to say that a product or service is only as good as the people who support it, and the MPLS service from du is very stable," he adds. In fact, highly dependable infrastructure is a central tenant of EHL's business imperative. "We approach clinical quality by focusing on structures, processes and outcomes of care. Superior clinical outcomes can only be achieved through infrastructure of a high standard and care processes that are sophisticated, reliable and free of errors."



"We are very client-facing, and do everything in our power to give patients the very best customer experience." Always looking for ways to continuously enhance this, Schoeman has identified new data communications services as providing some interesting new alternatives for remote or so-called telehealth, which would further improve the customer experience.

Telehealth is the delivery of health-related services and information via telecommunications technologies. Telehealth delivery could be as simple as two health professionals discussing a case over the telephone, or as sophisticated as two surgeons at facilities in two countries discussing surgical procedures across a hi-definition videoconferencing link, or as complex as the use of remote-sensing and applied robotics.

As a means of providing better reliability and increased performance EHL's fully redundant MPLS network is vital to the well-being of its healthcare operation, as it is to the well-being of patients. Because of du's vigilant technical services and support, the EHL MPLS service is always very stable.

EHL Management Services in profile

- EHL is a healthcare management company, a joint venture between the listed South African Mediclinic, the Dubai-based Varkey Group and General Electric.
- Established in 1984, it operates and manages some of the most successful and trusted healthcare facilities in the region.
- In Dubai include Welcare Hospital, The City Hospital, EHL Dubai Mall Medical Centre, Emirates Diagnostic Clinic and Welcare Ambulatory Care Centre.
- Welcare Hospital has become the preferred choice for local residents and GCC nationals alike.
- In 2000, Welcare Hospital became the first private hospital in the UAE to be awarded the Dubai Quality Appreciation Programme.
- EHL provides a full range of care from trauma to a toothache, pre-natal care to preventive medicine.

Schoeman is adamant that the application of hi-definition and highly reliable video services across high-availability comms lines could play a transformational role in certain healthcare scenarios. "Some say that this is the future, but I can see a genuine need today for telehealth in EHL."

Presently, in certain special cases, a UAE patient might be recommended on for overseas referral to a specialist surgeon or consultant in one of EHL's sister hospitals or one of the clinics. But, as Schoeman suggests, as an alternative to expensive and time-consuming international travel for the patient, telehealth services promise direct and immediate communication between the patient, and any surgeon or clinician in the EHL network – wherever they are.

One of Schoeman's key objectives is to position the technology architecture of the company to take full advantage of any future business opportunity. "I also have to manage the technology and business infrastructure in the most cost-effective way." The use of cost-efficient high-bandwidth managed video is one area identified as offering an opportunity for enhanced customer experience, improved consultative care and increased knowledge transfer. He is looking towards partners like du to help him fully exploit the technology, in ways that would benefit the business and its healthcare customers alike.

