

AnswerPhone manages high caller volume by leveraging dedicated fiber network

National answering service keeps businesses in touch with clients using Managed Network Edge

AnswerPhone, an Albany, New York-based answering service, wanted to improve its reliability and responsiveness. To make this happen, they collaborated with Spectrum Business on a complete network upgrade.

Founded nearly a century ago, AnswerPhone serves some 2,500 businesses, government agencies and non-profit organizations across the nation. Having a human operator answer calls whenever their clients are not able to has been the company's business model for generations. But as demand for their services grew, so did the difficulty of managing so many calls.

"We handle a quarter-million calls every month, with about 100,000 of them fielded by live operators," says Edward Dybas, Director of Special Projects, AnswerPhone. "Sometimes we will have as many as 250 simultaneous calls at any given moment. We wanted a solution that can handle all that without blipping out or choppiness or static."

It's not just a need to answer every call, Dybas explains, but that they must do so in a manner that satisfies the quality expectations of both callers and clients. For this, Dybas strategized with Spectrum Business, his technology partner.

A network designed to avoid overload

As a longtime Spectrum Business customer, AnswerPhone counts on reliable connectivity. As Dybas notes: "Our Spectrum Business circuit is always on." What was needed was a network platform that allowed for greater control and responsiveness.

AnswerPhone wanted hold times kept to a minimum without the risk of dropped calls. The clients they serve include medical centers, hospices, mental health helplines, national emergency-support organizations and state investigatory agencies. All serve people with critical needs, in situations that can often be highly sensitive.

"We also have apartment complexes and HVAC companies that people will call in the dead of winter if pipes freeze and they need service," Dybas adds. "People need to know there is someone there to take their call when an emergency comes up, no matter when."

Dara Rooney, Account Manager, Spectrum Business, and her team discussed incorporating a networking tool to enable the instantaneous transfer of workflow. AnswerPhone has a headquarters in Albany, NY, and two call centers in North Carolina and Georgia. Call traffic needed to be more effectively distributed between them.



For nearly a century, AnswerPhone has been handling emergency and after-hours calls for a variety of public and private sector clients. To boost the reliability and speed of their connectivity to better meet high demand, AnswerPhone had Spectrum Business install Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI).

Client profile



Company

AnswerPhone

Industry

Professional Services

Services

Managed Network Edge

Wireless Internet

Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI)

Overview

- AnswerPhone, a nationwide call answering service, wanted to service some 2,500 national clients more reliably and with higher call quality.
- To better address load balancing issues and manage a widely distributed workforce, simplicity and control were sought with a dynamic network solution.
- A network design was also needed to facilitate faster, more dynamic collaboration between key service locations in three different states.

Outcomes

- Seamless internet connectivity with a 100% service level agreement uptime guarantee by Spectrum Business was established by deploying a Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI) circuit at each location.
- To manage the heavy flow of data created when fielding thousands of calls for hundreds of clients, AnswerPhone chose Managed Network Edge.
- Because reliability, speed and high availability are paramount service needs, Spectrum Business deployed a full backup system for AnswerPhone.

Why it matters

- Call quality is never an issue with dedicated fiber connectivity providing both highly reliable voice service and an automatic backup functionality to protect against signal delay.
- The ability to centralize workflow across a network allows AnswerPhone to accommodate offsite team members in a secure and highly stable manner.
- Having a cloud-based network tool accessed via mobile app enables AnswerPhone IT staff to immediately manage crucial issues from any location.



The three AnswerPhone call centers must be able to swap their volume of incoming traffic, minimize delay and ensure high voice quality. The ability to control bandwidth so each location has the capacity it needs is part of the functionality made available with Managed Network Edge.

“What we saw they needed was a software defined wide area network configuration that allows each of their locations to talk to one another,” she explains.

AnswerPhone got an SD-WAN, along with centralized control at the hub and firewall protection to detect and prevent cyberattack with the installation of [Managed Network Edge](#). This solution also includes a cloud-based portal, which allows Dybas to monitor and control network activity from any location via computer or mobile device.

Maximizing connectivity for greater reliability

Another network need was more dynamic fiber connectivity to give the network multiple failover options in case of a circuit break. Spectrum Business suggested a strategy of having separate internet connections at every major AnswerPhone location.

“We saw a good fit for having fiber set up at all locations,” notes Tim Donnelly, Technical Sales Consultant, Spectrum Business. “That way each

of their main offices have their own connection to the internet, which they can then leverage to extend their network as needed without anyone having to pull plugs at a particular site.”

The additional circuits ensure the call centers always stay online. They also improved signal strength at each location. “Voices now come through more clearly, with minimal delay,” Dybas says. “Call quality is right where we need it to be.”

“Our network can take the throughput, the load of simultaneous calls going through our system at any given time. And the quality of the individual calls we are fielding has never been better.”

– Edward Dybas, IT Director, AnswerPhone

The three fiber circuits offer high speed, low latency connectivity with 24/7/365 monitoring and Spectrum Business service level agreements guaranteeing 100%



With clients ranging from apartment-building managers to personal physicians to commercial businesses, service reliability is key for AnswerPhone. Their technology partnership with Spectrum Business gives AnswerPhone the added assurance of 24/7/365 service support.

uptime. As AnswerPhone grows its business, they also can expand their bandwidth many times over by utilizing the scalability of [Dedicated Fiber Internet \(DFI\)](#).

"Reliability is key," Dybas says. "Our clients need us to answer their calls whenever they are forwarded, day or night. Now, with our new Spectrum Business technology infrastructure working off three connected circuits, we are better protected against disruption, inside or outside of our network."

Improving response with high availability

AnswerPhone sought other ways to avoid systematic connectivity failure. To maximize consistency across the network, they introduced high availability to their network with the installation of a second Managed Network Edge platform.

A High Availability solution minimizes downtime and reduces the risk of networking disruptions by running Virtual Router Redundancy Protocol

(VRRP) heartbeats to monitor the health of the primary device. Operating on an independent WAN connection, High Availability switches the entire AnswerPhone network to a backup device in the event of sudden failure, ensuring continuous service.

"If ever a circuit went down, this new system would pick up connectivity where the last one left off," Dybas explains. "We were looking for a failover solution we can trust. Now we have it, and so do our clients."

Another redundancy investment was made by setting up emergency connectivity to protect their North Carolina location, where connectivity

"Our reliability is central to what we have to offer our clients. Having Spectrum Business as a technology partner we can count on is very important to our business."

- Edward Dybas, IT Director, AnswerPhone

is often threatened by hurricanes. To keep the office connected to the network even when power is down, AnswerPhone had Spectrum Business install a [Wireless Internet](#) backup circuit.

"Before, we could provide emergency power to our North Carolina location, but not emergency internet," Dybas explains. "Now we can do both. We need to be always available to the people who count on us, especially during disasters, so it's real nice to have that."

Unifying a widespread workforce

Another important Managed Network Edge capability is facilitating remote and hybrid work situations for AnswerPhone employees.

"We've moved to a hybrid work environment where about 60% of our staff are working remotely," Dybas says. "Many of our employees can manage call service from home, but before Managed Network Edge, people would have to come in if they can't connect to the network. We see much less of that now."



The ability to access a portal that provides complete visibility is a critical feature of Managed Network Edge. By accessing a cloud-based app from a computer or mobile device, a designated AnswerPhone user enjoys vast, deep oversight. This includes how bandwidth is being channeled, user activity across the network and firewall monitoring.

Dybas himself can manage the AnswerPhone network from his home in Europe, a responsibility he says is less challenging with Managed Network Edge support: “I can manage traffic shaping or software updates while I’m on a plane,” he says. “Best of all, I can get good sleep at night and not worry if things are running or not.”

The reliability of that network is critical to capturing future growth opportunities.

“Part of our success is our clients’ success,” Dybas explains. “We need to answer their phones whenever they do not, whether it’s after hours, during business meetings, inclement weather, early closings. We have a good reputation. In these last few years with Spectrum Business, whenever calls aren’t getting forwarded to us, our clients know from experience the issue is on their end, not ours.”

“I’m always in the Managed Network Edge portal. I’m actually in it at this very moment. I have complete visibility into our entire network whenever I need it, which is a nice feeling in itself.”

– Edward Dybas, IT Director, AnswerPhone

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