silver peak®

# Forward-looking bank achieves higher network service levels at dramatically lower cost

## MidSouth Bank builds flexible broadband WAN for a hybrid cloud future with EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform

Banks can sometimes earn a reputation for being "old school" institutions. Being heavily regulated they tend to be conservative about how data is accessed and shared, and in many cases technology is viewed as just another cost of doing business. But MidSouth Bank sees things differently.

Senior management at this Louisiana-based financial institution recognized that technology can be a valuable resource for enabling new levels of business efficiency, delivering an enhanced customer experience—even as a means to reducing costs rather than increasing them. However, the bank's IT infrastructure was aging and no longer supported its strategy of innovation and expansion.

That's when Daniel Hereford, MidSouth's senior vice president and chief information officer, stepped in. To Hereford, the bank's technology challenges were a source of inspiration for bringing positive change and transforming the technology landscape at MidSouth Bank. It didn't take him long to determine

MidSouth Bank

INCREASED BANDWIDTH 5X

REDUCED WAN COSTS 55%

INCREASED FLEXIBILITY

where to begin. Within a week of starting his new position, Hereford was presented with a renewal letter from the bank's wide area network (WAN) service provider for its MPLS leased lines.

"We were going to be out of contract within a month," Hereford recalls, "but I wasn't going to automatically renew the same MPLS network services we had before. I wanted to understand our needs and choose a solution that would best meet the bank's business objectives going forward."

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— Daniel Hereford, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer, MidSouth Bank

## The ultimate in flexibility

MidSouth had a hodgepodge of applications—more than 40 mission critical applications and almost 100 ancillary applications—hosted on premises and in the cloud. "We are very much on a hybrid cloud journey," says Hereford "That necessitates ultimate flexibility in our network topology, and I believe SD-WAN is that topology."

The bank's legacy MPLS network had single circuits at every location, making resiliency and failover another top priority. The old solution also lacked visibility and control of application traffic—both critical to optimizing utilization of network resources and delivering the highest quality of experience to end users.

Hereford had a history with SD-WAN—Silver Peak SD-WAN specifically—but he did his due diligence and evaluated other SD-WAN vendors, including VeloCloud and Cisco. "There are competitive offerings in the marketplace, but Silver Peak does things that really stand out. Like multipathing. We tested Skype and video calling on all three vendors, and with both VeloCloud and Cisco, the video sessions dropped and had to be reestablished. Only Silver Peak kept the video going, which proved to me that Silver Peak really executes."

## Automation streamlines deployment

MidSouth Bank is rapidly deploying the Silver Peak Unity EdgeConnect™ SD-WAN edge platform to all of its 42 sites across Louisiana and Texas. With 30 sites completed to date, the bank continues to roll out the EdgeConnect platform at a pace of one to two sites per week. Using configuration templates built in the Unity Orchestrator™ management interface was key to accelerating deployments.

Hereford notes, "The zero-touch provisioning that Silver Peak provides is another capability that stands out. Using Orchestrator to auto-discover and pull configurations down from the cloud really streamlines deployment."

At each site, the EdgeConnect appliance is terminated with a Dedicated Internet Access (DIA) circuit and a commercial broadband link, bonded to enable both paths to be actively used simultaneously. As the EdgeConnect rollout advances, Hereford is decommissioning the old MPLS circuits and retiring edge routers at each location.

## Higher level of service at lower cost

With its new SD-WAN topology, MidSouth Bank has increased available bandwidth from 10 Mbps MPLS to 50 Mbps DIA with secondary broadband links of up to 100 Mbps. While increasing available bandwidth five times and more, the bank still reduced its WAN services costs by 55 percent.

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Increased bandwidth, combined with capabilities such as path conditioning, quality of service (QoS), and dynamic path control on the EdgeConnect platform, increased application performance dramatically. For example, launch times on MidSouth's sales platform went down from two minutes to just 7 – 20 seconds—as much as a 94 percent improvement. Hereford also reports that CIFS traffic improved 76 percent and Office 365 traffic improved 22 percent.

Hereford has also begun using the optional Unity Boost™ WAN optimization performance pack to resolve latency issues at selected sites. And he continues to evaluate other use cases for Boost to improve application performance across the network.

Further ensuring that each application receives the network priority required, Hereford also takes advantage of business intent overlays with QoS policies, initially configuring overlays for voice, core banking, and Microsoft Office 365.

Hereford notes, "Prioritizing applications means when our banking professionals are sitting across the table from a customer, their application is going to respond as expected. That's a big confidence booster for the employees directly serving our customers."

## An ecosystem for the future

With sub-millisecond failover between links, MidSouth now has the resiliency and high network uptime it needs to ensure uninterrupted access to data center applications from any of its remote banking centers. And Hereford gained the flexibility he needed to handle a broad range of application types, as well as local breakout to the cloud.

"The really beautiful thing about SD-WAN is it obfuscates the transport," Hereford observes. "You're just delivering a service and you can do that with a lot of different providers or technologies, but still manage it the same way."

Hereford is also currently evaluating Palo Alto Networks and Zscaler to provide security for internet-bound traffic. Thanks to the strong partnerships between Silver Peak and both Palo Alto Networks and Zscaler, Hereford can seamlessly service chain to either security vendors' infrastructure or services within Orchestrator to dynamically steer cloud-destined traffic directly from the banking centers for further inspection and verification

"I'm really excited about the partnerships Silver Peak has," says Hereford. "That ecosystem adds to our flexibility and extends the value of EdgeConnect, which is crucial as we continue to migrate more of our applications and workloads into the cloud."

For more information on Silver Peak and our solutions, please visit: silver-peak.com

## Customer

MidSouth Bank is a wholly owned subsidiary of MidSouth Bancorp, Inc., a bank holding company headquartered in Lafayette, Louisiana, with assets of $1.7 billion as of December 31, 2018. Founded in 1985, MidSouth Bank offers a full range of banking services to commercial and retail customers at 42 locations in Louisiana and Texas and a national network of more than 55,000 surcharge-free ATMs.

## Challenge

MidSouth Bank had an aging network infrastructure that no longer kept pace with the bank's growth and innovation strategy. Single MPLS circuits at each banking center were oversubscribed, very costly, and lacked the flexibility to support the bank's journey to a hybrid cloud operating model.

## Solution

MidSouth Bank is rolling out the EdgeConnect platform to all of its 42 locations across Louisiana and Texas, decommissioning MPLS and replacing it with DIA and commercial broadband links. The bank is retiring edge routers, relying on EdgeConnect for intelligent traffic routing and local internet breakout, leveraging business intent overlays, QoS, path conditioning, and dynamic path control to optimize traffic flow and bandwidth utilization. The bank also uses Boost WAN optimization to accelerate application traffic and reduce latency at select remote sites, and centrally manages the SD-WAN with Orchestrator.

## Results

- Increased available bandwidth 5X while reducing costs 55 percent
- Improved application performance as much as 94 percent
- Enhanced quality of experience for banking professionals and customers
- Retired traditional routers, consolidating edge for greater efficiency
- Assured network resiliency for critical banking services
- Improved visibility with more granular control of application traffic flow
- Enabled secure, direct local breakout from banking centers to SaaS applications
- Gained flexibility to enable the business to grow and adopt new cloud services


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