Managing Health Care Compliance in the Cloud By Samuel Greengard

News article by Robbert Lamaker / September 7, 2016 / annual wellness visit / health care / medicare / wellness

WellTrackONE, a risk management firm in the health care field, takes a prescriptive approach to compliance that supports encryption at rest in a hybrid cloud.

As both costs and challenges mount in the health care industry, organizations are searching for new and better ways to treat patients. Within the Medicare arena, the challenges are even greater.

One company taking aim at this space is WellTrackONE, a four-year-old firm that offers wellness programs and other tools designed to predict and decrease the risk of chronic disease. Not surprisingly, technology plays a critical role in delivering the services required by health care providers.

"Our primary mission is to help primary care physicians achieve the best possible results when patients come to them for their annual Medicare, Medicaid or Medicare Advantage visit," explains Peter Bechtel, president and CEO of WellTrackONE. In addition, the firm supports commercial wellness programs. "We aim to make patients healthier, reduce Medicare costs and help physicians earn more income through a reduction in chronic disease onset, falls, breaks, and fractures within the Medicare population," he adds.

The company deals with protected health information (PHI), along with stringent Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements. "It's very sensitive information that must be rigorously protected," Bechtel explains.

WellTrackONE had originally turned to a hybrid cloud in a hosted data center, but management wasn't comfortable with the basic business arrangement. "We had the level of security and protection we required, but they could not offer a business associate agreement," Bechtel notes. (A BAA protects protected health information in accordance with HIPAA guidelines via a contract.)

A Cloud Provider With Fast, Responsive Technical Support

That prompted the company to initiate a search for a cloud provider that could deliver a BAA, along with fast and responsive technical support. After surveying the vendor landscape and examining more than 20 different companies, WellTrackONE selected cloud hosting firm ViaWest.

The company began the data center migration in June 2015 and completed the task by September. "We were very clear from the start that we wanted an environment that was isolated to one or two specific industries, with health care as a primary focus," Bechtel notes.

The ViaWest cloud has delivered on that promise. The facility is limited strictly to banking and health care and supports encryption at rest within the hybrid cloud. Moreover, the vendor supports virtual private networking, along with multiple data center locations and robust disaster recovery.

"We had to know that in a worse-case scenario, we could be back in operation within a few hours," Bechtel says. "That was a critical issue."

WellTrackONE estimates the move has already saved the firm more than $200,000 in IT overhead, and the savings will accumulate over the years ahead. It also benefits by maintaining a lean IT team since ViaWest manages maintenance and security of the data environment. That, in turn, enables the firm's internal team to focus on core products and expanding the business rather than dealing with ongoing infrastructure and computing issues.

Bechtel reports that the company has built a solid IT foundation for future growth. "We are able to support the business now, but we also have the flexibility to expand IT as needed," he says. "We're growing very rapidly, and the IT platform is critical to success."

Samuel Greengard writes about business and technology for Baseline, CIO Insight and other publications. His most recent book is The Internet of Things (MIT Press, 2015).

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