

CASE STUDY



COMMUNITY-BASED HMO WITH A PASSION FOR PEOPLE



COMPANY PROFILE

COMPANY: Western Health Advantage

INDUSTRY: Health Insurance

ARMOR SOLUTION: Armor Anywhere

CLOUD PROVIDER: Armor's Private Cloud

WEBSITE: <https://www.westernhealth.com/>

WESTERN HEALTH ADVANTAGE: COMMUNITY-BASED HMO WITH A PASSION FOR PEOPLE



For companies operating within the heavily moderated medical insurance industry, there is no question of the importance placed on data security or the need to maintain compliance. Not only is medical and personal financial information at risk of being exploited by savvy dark web operators, but the potential damage to the reputation of a business and the financial fallout are equally concerning.

IT leaders of these companies have good reason to worry about the well-being of their network. Healthcare organizations continue to carry the highest costs associated with data breaches—to the tune of \$6.45 million on average per a global survey conducted in part by the Ponemon Institute.

One of the companies in this space is Western Health Advantage. A few years ago, the non-profit HMO began to explore cloud migration solutions for its on-premises data centers that would not compromise its compliance standards or disrupt operations. The company also needed a solution that would provide a more comprehensive view of events and alerts to its leadership team.

PLANS WITH PEOPLE IN MIND

Founded in 1996 with a community-based mission by doctors and healthcare providers, California-based Western Health Advantage is consistently recognized for its quality and ability to deliver value to members. Its provider network is comprised of major hospitals, medical centers, and thousands of doctors and specialists. The company serves nine Northern California counties, including Sacramento, El Dorado, Napa, Sonoma, and Marin.

Though both the medical and insurance fields are highly systemized, Western Health Advantage injects a good dose of “bedside manner” into its operations to solidify a highly respected position in the market.

“We are known for our great customer service and for having that ‘human touch,’” said IT Infrastructure Manager Eric Sibley. “When you call, you will talk to a human being. We are community-based, and that is our strength.” As the company’s infrastructure manager, Sibley oversees operations and growth of its server platform; this includes 285 endpoints of laptops and desktops and 80 servers.

Just as many businesses do, Western Health Advantage housed its data within a large on-premises data center, and as it began to revamp its IT infrastructure over the years, Sibley knew that the company needed the technology—and a partner—that would understand both its cloud and scalability needs without risking its reputation or compromising compliance requirements.



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— Eric Sibley,
IT Infrastructure Manager,
Western Health Advantage



“Remaining both HIPAA- and HITRUST-compliant is not only a requirement, but it is a competitive advantage,” Sibley said. “When companies are looking to pick up an insurance provider like us, organizations rate plans based on how good they are and how well security is maintained. These ratings are seen by potential customers, and if you have a low rating it doesn’t look good.”

Complicating the upcoming change was the company’s lack of IT and personnel resources to match those of for-profits.

Because Western Health Advantage does not own the building where its operations are located, the company did not want to scale on-premises. And, as a non-profit, company leaders were highly cognizant of their budgeting restraints, needing to look at options that would scale their business but not require more IT staff to manage their data center.

FILLING A PARTNER PRESCRIPTION

When Sibley's team at Western Health Advantage began to research their options, simplicity was key to business continuity and keeping compliance as a competitive advantage.

From a comprehensive analysis conducted with Gartner to onsite and in-person pitches, Western Health Advantage sought out several potential cloud partners, but it was Armor's private cloud, secured with Armor Anywhere, that proved to be the cure they were looking for.

"It became very clear, even at that time, that Armor was very mature. We wanted the maturity and expertise of Armor, and we needed someone who could be a good partner and guide," Sibley said.

The infrastructure of Armor Anywhere and Armor's private cloud delivered the security and compliance controls Western Health Advantage was seeking. Backed by the support of Armor's Security Operations Center (SOC) team, Western Health Advantage leaders were alleviated of their concerns for security, business continuity, and disaster recovery. The simplicity that Western Health Advantage desired was made possible with the fully managed migration and ongoing support of the private cloud option add-on as well.

"Armor absolutely simplifies our operations—whether we need new servers or operational guidance. Armor is a time-saver for us," said Sibley. "We trust Armor to keep our 'precious cargo' safe. Now, we are able to focus on our efforts to generate new revenue and solve other major challenges."

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We've always felt a genuine partnership with Armor. The way Armor invests in its customers is why we are with them. We have worked with a lot of vendors, and we do not have the type of relationship with them as we do with Armor.





TRUSTING THE TECH

Because Armor is HITRUST-certified, healthcare customers such as Western Advantage Health can place their trust in technology specifically designed to address the risk-based nature of HIPAA compliance.

“Obviously, there are a lot of security and compliance concerns being in healthcare,” said Sibley. “Because Armor is HITRUST-certified, we have ‘safe harbor’ and the flexibility of the cloud to scale on demand.”

Reporting on AS 120, Western Health Advantage utilizes a metric that scores a business on vulnerability and risk, with the result designating its risk level at high, medium, or low. While the average score within its industry ranges from medium to medium-high, Western Health Advantage’s overall score is 100 points less than others. Sibley credits this huge turnaround to the insights the company receives from the vulnerabilities and risk reporting provided by Armor’s private cloud, secured with Armor Anywhere. Western Health Advantage’s overall leadership team finds the report invaluable for letting them know when events happen.

“We use Tenable to see how our environment stacks up,” said Sibley. “And the stats from Tenable and Armor let us know what our footprint looks like and what events and alerts are happening. We use that to report to leadership, and it really opens eyes when you can show that information.”



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Western Health Advantage's trust in Armor has grown into a like-minded partnership, according to Sibley. So much so that Armor handles several applications and technology—domain controllers, database servers, and analytic tools—for them.

"I have a lot of respect and positivity with Armor," said Sibley. "Armor has helped us in times of need, even sending people to help us move servers. We have never had a vendor come to help like Armor did."



We have never had a vendor come to help like Armor did. Simply put, we chose a partner whose goals are in line with ours. It's a genuine partnership, and the way they invest in their customers is why we are with them.





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