

A10

CASE STUDY

Delta Dental Of Michigan Optimizes Applications And Simplifies Operations With A10 Harmony Controller

Whether you are going to the dentist for a routine cleaning or a shiny new crown, no one likes surprises—especially when that surprise is a big bill. With Delta Dental, patients don't need to file any paperwork. Participating dentists are paid directly, and there's no balance billing. That's one of the reasons why Delta Dental of Michigan is the largest, most experienced dental benefits carrier in the state.

Delta Dental of Michigan, along with its affiliates in Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio and Tennessee, make up one of the largest dental plan administrators in the U.S. as part of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a nationwide system of independently operated dental health service plans. The Delta Dental PPO network supports more than 108,100 dentists, and the Delta Dental Premier network has more than 154,400 dentists.

At Delta Dental, we like to work smarter, not harder. The A10 Harmony Controller helps us do that.

— Kevin Klott
Network & Hosting Services Manager
Delta Dental of Michigan

 **DELTA DENTAL**[®]

Industry | Healthcare



Network Solution

A10 Harmony[®] Controller HC 8000
A10 Thunder[®] ADC



Critical Issues

- Strategic approach for refresh of next-generation ADCs
- Lacked single pane-of-glass management to assure application availability, performance and integrated security for dental practice software and e-commerce websites



Results

- Work smarter, helping dentists to process claims and verify eligibility quickly
- Simplify IT operations
- Increase agility of DevOps team with centralized software-defined functions
- Share the platform with SecOps for security vulnerabilities detection and rule configuration
- Fast forward compatibility with Red Hat OpenShift Kubernetes support

Challenges

With consistently high satisfaction ratings from patients and dentists alike, demand for Delta Dental's services is growing rapidly. Over the last six years, Delta Dental (including Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana affiliates) has grown by 2.2 million subscribers—an 83 percent increase.

Beyond dealing with significant business growth, digital is transforming the dental consumer and provider experience—reformulating every interaction from marketing and education to administration and claims. Delta Dental needed to provide patients and dentists with round-the-clock access to their claim information and dental practice software, with no delays, hiccups or security glitches.

Affiliated dentists use the Dental Office Toolkit®, which runs on Delta Dental's e-commerce site, to verify patient eligibility and benefit information, submit pre-treatment estimate requests and claims for payment, and view the status of submitted claims. Similarly, patients use Delta Dental's Consumer Toolkit® for secure, online access to their benefit information, including finding an in-network dentist and reviewing benefit eligibility and claims. Patients also can use Delta Dental's mobile app.

Selection Criteria

Delta Dental set out to refresh its data center to keep pace with significant business growth and the digital transformation imperative. As an integral part of its new data center infrastructure, Delta Dental deployed the A10 Thunder® 3230 ADC (Application Delivery Controller) to support its mission-critical applications. Using advanced Layer 4-7 techniques, the A10 Thunder ADC provides high server availability, protects vulnerable applications and accelerates content delivery for Delta Dental's mission-critical applications for dentists and patients.

“One of the things we lacked was a single pane of glass to see what's going on between all of the A10 controllers and inside the partitions,” says Dave Baldwin, lead network engineer at Delta Dental and a 20-year veteran of the company. “We wanted more granular details about what's happening so we can isolate symptoms more quickly, especially when our developers report an issue.”

To ensure that its e-commerce and dental practice applications are not only highly available, accelerated and secure, but also offer high-fidelity visibility into their e-commerce and application traffic, Delta Dental decided to take the next step toward centralized, agile management.

It also needed a management solution that was compatible with future application platforms, such as containers, and could be deployed over private data centers and cloud services.



The A10 Solution

"As soon as we saw the A10 Harmony Controller, we wanted it," says Baldwin.

The A10 Harmony® Controller provides centralized agile management, automation and analytics for the A10 Thunder ADC and load balancing platforms. Delta Dental uses the A10 Harmony Controller to manage its A10 Thunder instances and other A10 services that implement and enforce policies.

The A10 Harmony Controller collects, analyzes and reports on traffic flowing through Delta Dental's A10 Thunder clusters, which front-end its WebLogic application servers. Centralized visibility and intelligence derived from per-app analytics greatly increases operational efficiency for applications and operations teams.

Results

"At Delta Dental, we like to work smarter, not harder," says Kevin Klott, network and hosting services manager at Delta Dental. "The A10 Harmony Controller helps us do that."

"Previously, when we had performance problems, it took a lot of manual work to get into the A10 ADCs," says Baldwin. "We had to get all the information from the command line, and we couldn't search easily."

That has all changed.

"A10 Harmony gives us a single pane of glass to show us what's hot. We can drill down very quickly to see where the performance problems are," says Baldwin.

The A10 Harmony Controller will play a vital role beyond day-to-day operations. Delta Dental is embracing a DevOps model to develop and deploy enhancements to its core applications. "DevOps can radically improve the cycle time for enhancements to application code," says Klott.

Agile management is critical in a DevOps environment, and with the insights and automation provided by the A10 Harmony Controller, Delta Dental's network engineers can work more collaboratively with the organization's developers and other functional IT teams.

When developers suspect an application performance issue, they no longer have to open up a trouble ticket or call the network team. They can gain detailed insight into the performance of highly complex application services through the A10 Harmony graphical user interface.

"By giving application teams read-only access to the A10 Harmony portal, developers can see for themselves what's happening with the load balancers and get a larger perspective," says Baldwin.

And, that lets everyone get more work done faster.

"When we're bringing new software online, we can use the A10 Harmony Controller to capture the data so we can see the trends over time," says Klott.

The IT team can use the A10 Harmony Controller to automate deployment and operations of its application services, which increases operational efficiency and enhances the user experience. Simplifying the management of distributed application services shortens troubleshooting times and enables the IT team to proactively optimize application services.



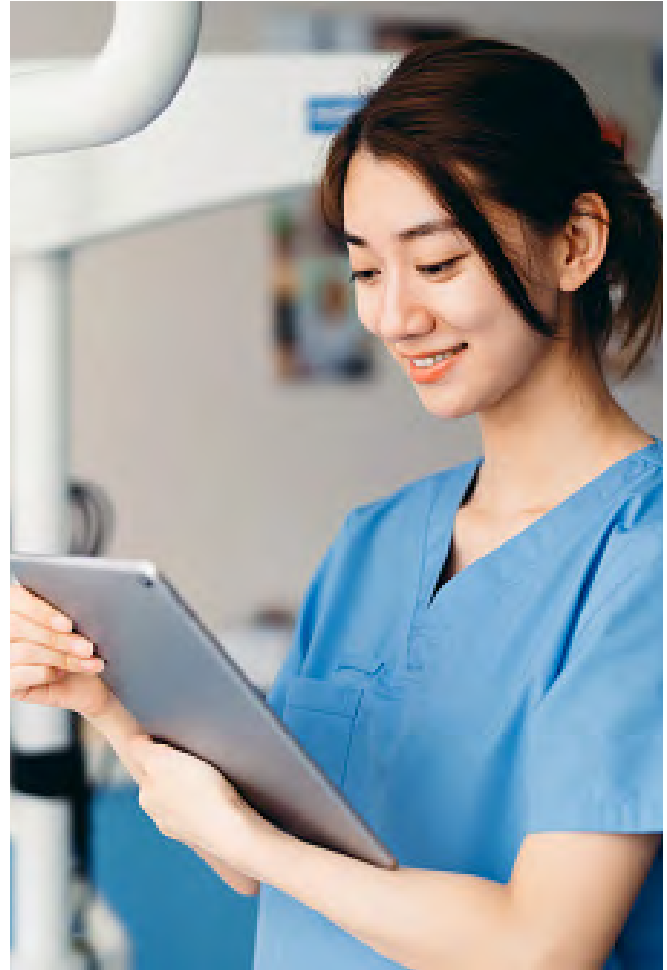
Success And Next Steps

Agile management, automation and analytics will prove to be even more valuable as Delta Dental embraces open source options, including Red Hat OpenShift for its container application platform and Kubernetes for container orchestration. The A10 Harmony Controller is designed for a multi-cloud environment, allowing Delta Dental to choose the right mix of private, public or hybrid cloud to fit its business needs while still delivering optimal performance for its core business applications like Dental Office Toolkit and Consumer Toolkit.

“By choosing A10, we are future-proofing our plans for the shift to cloud-native applications,” says Klott.

An established customer for nearly a decade, the Delta Dental IT team has built a strong relationship with A10. “As a company, A10 has been behind us, supporting us and are always willing to help,” says Baldwin.

Delta Dental can be confident of that same product and service excellence as it continues to transform its mission-critical applications to meet the growing demand for its dental plans.



About Delta Dental Of Michigan

Delta Dental of Michigan and its affiliates in Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio and Tennessee make up one of the largest dental plan administrators in the nation, covering over 13.3 million people.

The Delta Dental plans are members of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a nationwide system of independently operated dental health service plans. Together, the plans provide coverage to more than 73 million Americans and operate two of the nation's largest networks of participating dentists.



App Delivery Needs to Evolve:
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About A10 Networks

A10 Networks (NYSE: ATEN) provides secure application services for on-premises, multi-cloud and edge-cloud environments at hyperscale. Our mission is to enable service providers and enterprises to deliver business-critical applications that are secure, available and efficient for multi-cloud transformation and 5G readiness. We deliver better business outcomes that support investment protection, new business models and help future-proof infrastructures, empowering our customers to provide the most secure and available digital experience. Founded in 2004, A10 Networks is based in San Jose, Calif. and serves customers globally.

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