



TEAMING UP FOR THE CHILDREN

Necco and Emerge have a good thing going: a partnership based on trust and mutual respect. So, we spoke with Nick Balanzo, the Director of Enterprise Technology at Necco, to inquire about the relationship and the impact Emerge has had on the organization.

First, tell us about Necco.

Necco provides services across the entire child foster care lifecycle. We identify the kids needing help and the parents to foster them. We also provide behavioral therapy for those kids who need it. And when they turn 18, if they still need help, we provide independent living services and employment assistance. We also operate a residential facility for those between the ages of 8 and 21 who have autism and behavioral challenges.

How did the relationship with Emerge begin?

Initially, our primary need involved correcting a lack of general oversight, standardization, and global management of our IT systems across all of our then 25 locations. From an IT standpoint, each location was a proverbial island. Miscommunications among locations

and network outages drove staff member frustration. Not only did our offices feel isolated from each other, but our employees also felt isolated from anyone who could help. Our organization's past experience with IT support mainly consisted of unreturned phone calls and delayed fixes.

How did Emerge solve this for Necco?

Emerge didn't arrive on the scene and start rattling off recommendations — they began with asking questions and active listening. They asked our employees what they needed to succeed at their jobs. Our then 650 employees filled out surveys and discussed their expectations. Emerge visited every one of our sites, getting to know the team in person and explaining what they could do for us, how to contact them, and what the future would bring.

To remedy our situation, Emerge recommended an upgrade to Cisco Meraki networking. The combination of Meraki cloud networking and the Emerge remote monitoring platform allows visibility into each of Necco's locations quickly and easily, down to a granular level. They can control and adjust how bandwidth is used, ensuring maximum productivity, driving our uptime to 99%.

After the fundamentals were shored up, what came next?

We have turned to Emerge for a host of IT needs, and they have yet to disappoint. They run our help desk, which serves our 820 employees, and while we could likely operate this in-house, they have created efficiencies we cannot replicate, allowing for us to focus on our mission.

Emerge also enhanced our security posture, taking us from basic anti-virus protection to a next-gen version with 24/7 monitoring, advanced analytics, and AI. Emerge provides a Security Operations Center (SOC) service for detection and response. What's impressive is that they helped us take this major step forward without increasing our costs.

We also worked with Emerge and our printing partner, ProSource, to replace our entire printer fleet. This may seem like a small thing, but with 38 locations now, it was a big deal, and they did a great job.

In addition, we recently began utilizing Emerge's private cloud. We were impressed with the technical quality of the operations as well as all the power and internet redundancy. One of the reasons we awarded this work to Emerge is that they were able to meet our aggressive timeline.

What's it like working with Emerge?

I work hand-in-hand with Emerge and fully trust them. They create partnerships — not transactions. When inevitable hiccups occur, they address them in a timely and proactive manner. Their mission alignment and bias to action is a positive reflection on myself and my team to the organization.

How so?

Emerge recently created an opportunity for some of the children we serve to enjoy a special performance of "The Little Mermaid" by the Cincinnati Ballet. While we push all our partners to do this sort of thing, Emerge made it happen without us asking them to, speaking volumes about the kind of company they are.

Any final thoughts?

In the past three years, I've doubled my business with Emerge because they deliver on price and value. That pretty much says it all.

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– Nick Balanzo

Director of Enterprise Technology