



Redundancy and Simplicity:

How Propel Insurance Utilizes The Semaphore
Business Platform with Cloud Accelerator to
Continue to Lead the Insurance Industry



Introduction

When most people think of the insurance industry, they don't think about technological wizardry. But if Propel Insurance is any indication, they should.

Headquartered in Tacoma, Washington, Propel Insurance is an insurance broker that is known for the intensity of its commitment to finding solutions to the complex insurance questions that defy simple one size fits all policies. They employ roughly 450 people spread across five – soon to be six – physical locations. Harnessing decades of experience, Propel services a wide variety of industries including affordable housing, banking, and construction and they are considered market leaders in servicing the senior living industry—where the insurance issues are currently growing more complicated by the minute.

Given the complexity of the issues that Propel deals with on a daily basis, along with their commitment to finding solutions that meet their customers' needs, it is essential that they partner with vendors that can help them reduce IT complexity and improve the network reliability so that they can be available to their customers whenever needed. It did not take long for Propel to recognize that Semaphore's team of experts shared the same dedication to customer experience and reliability.

Today, Propel and Semaphore are working together using The Semaphore Business Platform with Cloud Accelerator to continue the innovations that have become a signature of Propel Insurance's ability to succeed in an industry that is rarely thought of as cutting edge.

From an ISP Provider to a Problem Solver



Propel Insurance is a forward-thinking company dedicated to developing innovations through the cloud. They utilize virtual desktops which enables them to work without bothering with a single physical desktop at Propel. All of Propel's servers and user's virtual desktops live in AWS, which means that Propel is almost always running something in the Cloud. Their relationship with Semaphore started low-key, as Senior Systems Engineer Matt Reinhart explains, "Semaphore was just one of the two internet providers we had, and we used them strictly as an ISP." In that role, Semaphore was performing admirably. Matt notes that the other ISP would develop a hiccup twice a month where it would drop to the next channel, but with Semaphore, "I've never seen any issues."

One day Matt decided to track down all of Propel's static IPs and "found some odd, strange things." He reached out to Semaphore and the ensuing conversation revealed to Matt that there was great potential for a partnership that could develop simplicity and redundancy. The key was Semaphore's expertise.

As Matt explains it, the Semaphore team brought experts to the table from the very beginning. Like so many other systems engineers, Matt says he "gets frustrated when you talk to these vendors, and when you start asking technical questions and they always have to say, 'That's a great question, I'll have to get back to you.'" With Semaphore, Matt noted that,

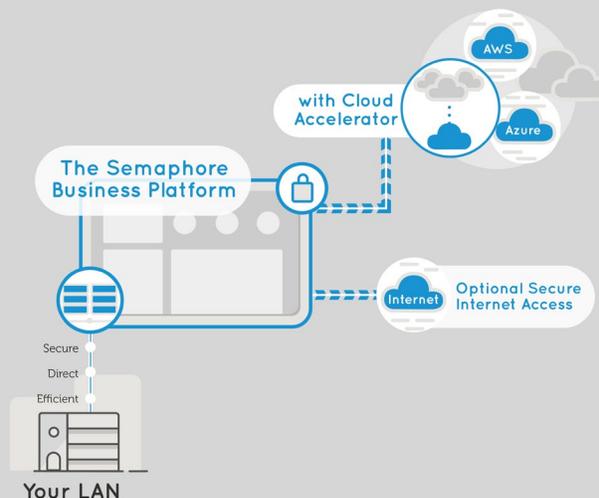


from from the get-go, Semaphore presented people who were extremely knowledgeable who could answer your question immediately. There was no sense that this was just a sales organization without a strong technical foundation.



In the same way that Propel uses its decades of experience to understand each customer's unique insurance needs, Semaphore took the time to understand the problem and present solutions that could actually help Matt to advance the innovations that gave Propel its edge.

Delivering Simplicity and Redundancy



After reviewing Propel's entire network infrastructure, the Semaphore team presented the benefits of utilizing their Business Platform with Cloud Accelerator. Matt was impressed with the focus on simplifying their network while generating tremendous redundancy to ensure uninterrupted service to Propel customers. According to Matt, "what Semaphore did well was to show how the platform could add value to us, not only by saving us money, which it has, but they pitched us on the fact that it could simplify our network, and could also make our network more redundant at the same time as it was being made simpler."

The Semaphore team went to work right away. Matt was impressed at the quality of their communication as they worked to implement the Business Platform with Cloud Accelerator. Matt explains, "They did a good job keeping us in the communication loop of when things are going to happen, what exactly was going to happen. They gave us a full project outline and project plan and, we're going to do exactly these things on this date." The clear communication was essential to build trust at all levels. Matt summarizes, "I think for myself and the CIO at the time, being kept in the loop, that really helped us feel at ease because it's your network. It's your baby. You don't want to just hand that off blindly to somebody without knowing exactly what's going to happen."

Within four months of the first conversation, Semaphore had fully implemented the platform and Matt was already seeing the benefits in action. As Matt explains, "Semaphore does redundant lines, and that was a big force for us to utilize their system. They had multiple redundant backups on their servers, as well as the providers of those circuit. I think that's really the saving grace of it." Matt has already seen the twin benefits of simplicity and redundancy in action. Not only have they reduced their costs, but "Semaphore was able to deliver the value of reducing the complexity of the infrastructure and making it more redundant at the same time. I think the real savings is the peace of mind of the redundancy of the network."

A Relationship for the Future

Propel Insurance has continued to sustain growth even under the pressure of the COVID crisis. While other companies have scrambled to figure out how to work from home, Propel was able to make the switch overnight.

The decision to adopt The Semaphore Business Platform with Cloud Accelerator was initially driven by a desire for simplicity and improved redundancy, two values that are more important now than ever. Over time, though, Matt has also come to understand that Semaphore's expertise is an asset that gives him confidence to continue to push the innovations and forward-thinking that have helped Propel become a leader in the insurance industry. According to Matt, developing trust with a vendor is essential and in the case of Semaphore, he trusts them based on their expertise, their communication, and their performance. In the end, "I would say it's the comfort of knowing that Semaphore has been and will continue to do more work for us. They're not going to say, 'Once you sign the bottom line, you're stuck.' They want to work with us to push innovations and solve problems."



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