Calix

CASE STUDY

Critical Technology Upgrades Help Varcomm Reduce Trouble Tickets, Increase Revenue, and Improve Subscriber Experience

OVERVIEW

Varcomm is an incumbent local exchange carrier providing phone and high-speed Internet services to subscribers living in rural communities in California.

Founded in 1938, and originally called Ducor, the company currently serves subscribers in the community of Ducor, the Rancho Tehama Reserve in Northern California, as well as the community of Kennedy Meadows, located high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains along the Pacific Crest Trail.

In 2018, the company relaunched under the Varcomm brand, offering a host of new and enhanced broadband products and services to its subscribers.

Varcomm's mission is to continuously deliver exceptional network performance that meets or exceeds the expectations of its customers. As Varcomm CEO Eric Votaw notes, "The ethos that we have is all about making sure our customers have the best service possible."

THE CHALLENGE

Like many service providers, Varcomm saw changes in the online behavior of its subscribers. They were connecting more and more devices and using them to enjoy increasingly bandwidth-intensive applications, especially video streaming services. With an aging DSL infrastructure that was limited to providing maximum speeds of just 6 Mbps downstream and 1 Mbps upstream, the company recognized that it urgently needed to upgrade its network facilities if it was going to keep pace with the rapidly evolving needs of its subscribers.

VARCOMM
Your hometown network

COMPANY

Varcomm

WEBSITE

https://varcomm.net/

BUSINESS TYPE

ILEC

LOCATION

Avondale, AZ

Along with changes in subscriber behavior, the company was facing competitive pressure from other ISPs operating in its territory, many of which were offering faster Internet packages. As a regulated telephone company, Varcomm was obligated to provide minimum download speeds of 10 Mbps and upload speeds of 1 Mbps by the end of 2018 to comply with regulatory requirements set by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

As a result of these key drivers, Varcomm committed to an aggressive plan to upgrade its network infrastructure to VDSL technology. A key challenge for Varcomm was that its team did not have the level of telecom expertise it needed to execute on a project of this scale. As a result, the company knew it would need to enlist the help of a proven telecom partner with the right expertise to achieve its objectives.

THE SOLUTION

Varcomm had worked with Calix Professional Services on several network infrastructure projects in the past. Based on a proven track record of success working with Calix, the company decided to re-engage the Professional Services team to help them execute on their network transformation plans.

The first step towards providing true broadband speeds was to replace its legacy networking equipment with Calix VDSL equipment. The Professional Services team was tasked with performing a complete retrofit of 13 remote cabinets across two of Varcomm's three exchanges. This was a complex project that involved rebuilding each cabinet from the ground up, including upgrading the power systems and replacing the legacy DSL hardware.

The project got underway with an on-site meeting to ensure that the Professional Services team had an in-depth understanding of Varcomm's requirements. The Calix team then created a detailed implementation plan that covered each step in the process and set out a timeline to complete the project. This included ordering all the necessary equipment, defining the provisioning parameters, and generating the relevant network drawings. A Network Engineering Spec Book for the project, along with Methods of Procedure (MOPs), were also created to cover all aspects of deploying and turning up the new network facilities in Varcomm's network.

Once all the components of the new remote cabinets were installed, the Professional Services team conducted extensive testing to ensure that the systems were ready for live traffic. The final step involved taking the new remote sites live. To ensure that subscribers did not experience any down time, the installation team pulled a trailer to each remote site, which allowed them to cut subscribers over to the trailer temporarily before being reconnected to the newly upgraded network

THE RESULTS

The Calix Professional Services team completed the project on budget and ahead of schedule. In fact, in one of the exchanges, it completed the upgrades two weeks ahead of schedule, while in another exchange, work was completed three weeks ahead of schedule.

With Calix VDSL equipment deployed in the network, Varcomm was able to comfortably meet its regulatory obligations with the CPUC. It could also offer subscribers across 85 percent of its territory a 10 Mbps base package, as well as a premium option of 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream. While subscribers enjoyed a dramatically improved quality of service, Varcomm also saw an uptick in broadband revenue, as many existing subscribers moved to the higher-priced 10 Mbps package.

A reduction in trouble tickets was another immediate benefit that resulted in Varcomm's network capabilities. Prior to the upgrade, the majority of Varcomm's trouble tickets were related to subscriber issues with Internet speed and performance. When the upgrades were completed, and subscribers began experiencing a higher quality of service, Varcomm's trouble tickets were cut in half. Not only did this reduce the workload of the operations team, it also allowed Varcomm to re-deploy its technical resources to address some high-priority performance issues in another part of the network.

Overall Varcomm was very pleased with the results the Calix Professional Services team achieved. Throughout the project, the team demonstrated a high level of expertise, corrected any issues that came up, and worked extremely efficiently. The Calix team also kept in daily communication with the Varcomm team to make sure that they were aware of any developments and were satisfied with how the work was progressing. The constant communication was especially beneficial for the newer members of the Varcomm team, who were able to glean valuable technical information from the Professional Services representative that they could put to use in future projects.

As CEO Eric Votaw notes about the Professional Services team:

"They set guidelines, they set a schedule, they had an implementation timeline, and they beat it. They just went into battle and said this is what we need to do to win the war. Once they got their groove, they hit on all cylinders"

Eric Votaw,
CEO, Varcomm