



Going the Extra Mile for the Tennessee Bankers Association



The Company: Tennessee Bankers Association
Industry: Trade Association
Employees: 50

Situation

Founded in 1890, the Tennessee Bankers Association (TBA) offers a variety of services to Tennessee banks and financial institutions, including state and federal advocacy, compliance and operational training, and general industry representation. Every commercial bank and thrift institution in Tennessee is a member of TBA.

The association places a high value on member service and responsiveness, but by 2013, TBA's telecom infrastructure was proving to be a significant limiting factor. Their Internet system relied on business cable modem service with a copper 15 Mbps circuit. "That's *up to 15 Megs*," points out Steve Curtis, TBA's Vice President of Information Technology. "Download speeds were typically half of that and upload speeds were even lower, but it was all over the place. You never knew what you were going to get."

This was more than a minor inconvenience since TBA routinely conducts training sessions for as many as 200 people at its facility, often using the Internet while streaming live video. "On those days, I would have to tell the staff to stay off the Internet and I'd hold my breath the whole time, hoping the system would hold up," recalls Curtis.

Telephone service was not much better. It was delivered over half of a T1 circuit—the other half served as a backup for the data network. The insulation on the buried copper wiring was deteriorating so the entire phone system was liable to fail on a rainy day. TBA staff relies on reliable phone connections to reach banking CEOs, CFOs, and key government officials.

*"I've never had a kind word for a telecom company. I may have found an exception to that rule with **tw telecom**."*

*Steve Curtis,
Vice President,
Information Technology
Tennessee Bankers Association*

“Too often in the middle of these conversations, ‘Click,’ the line went dead,” says Curtis. “Our people ended up using their cell phones rather than the brand new telephone system we had just installed.”

In late 2013, Curtis invited multiple telecom companies to offer bids on a converged fiber 20 Mbps circuit with two Primary Rate Interfaces (PRIs) for phone service. He realized that 20 Mbps might still be insufficient on heavy bandwidth usage days, but Curtis was working within budget constraints.

Solution

tw telecom was one of the companies that responded to the opportunity to bid. “I had specified that 20 Megs was a minimum,” says Curtis. “Most companies bid the job at that level—some went lower in an attempt to drive the price down.

tw telecom was the only company to come back and say, ‘Yes, we can do 20 Megs, but we agree that you need more bandwidth than that.’ We negotiated, and ultimately **tw telecom**’s bid for end-to-end fiber at 50 Megs came in at a level I could work with.”

tw telecom had fiber in TBA’s geographic area so extending into TBA’s building was quick and easy. The **tw telecom** team installed the 50 Ethernet Mbps converged circuit with two PRIs well ahead of the scheduled April 30, 2014 turn-up date, a timeframe based on TBA’s existing contracts with current providers.

In mid-April, Curtis realized that April 18 would be a much more convenient turn-up date. “I called my **tw telecom** rep and asked if we could move up the date. Within 15 minutes he confirmed that this could be done. They changed their whole schedule and their guys came out and did the final installations and testing.”

The changeover went smoothly, taking just 30 minutes from start to finish. Phones were off-line for less than ten minutes. One aspect of the installation process especially resonated with Curtis. The job required the installation of a new 66 Block for telephone system connections.

“I haven’t had any telecom-related comments from my staff, but that is a compliment in and of itself. In the past, it was nothing but complaints.”

Steve Curtis,
Vice President,
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Typical demarc (interior wiring and hardware installation) protocol would place that equipment in the vicinity of the **tw telecom** rack. The **tw telecom** technician realized, however, that it would be much more convenient for the customer if the new 66 Block was installed directly above the old 66 Block. This entailed extra work for the technician, but, as Curtis describes, “That made my life incredibly easy as I was able to pull wires off one block and punch them onto [the **tw telecom** block] in seconds. I didn’t ask him to do that—he did it of his own accord.”

Results

These days Curtis is far less concerned about rainy days. “The 50 Meg fiber network is weatherproof,” he laughs. Similarly, training seminar days at TBA are no longer white-knuckle adventures for him; the network is reliable and robust, enabling staff to work normally on even the busiest training days.

“Our mission is to represent and support the banks, thrift institutions, and trust companies that are fueling the economy in Tennessee. Now our ability to do that won’t be jeopardized by inferior telecom technology and service,” emphasizes Curtis.

TBA’s affiliated insurance agency uses a major web-based CRM application and staff has noted that with the new circuit the application has never run better or smoother. Curtis finds it very telling, though, that he hears very little about Internet access and phone service from staff and members these days.

“That says everything right there. Our people just want to do their jobs, and now with reliable and enhanced telecom services that’s gotten a whole lot easier.”

“I heard about Steve Curtis’ reaction to the 66 Block installation,” says Steve Yazell, VP and General Manager for **tw telecom** in Nashville. “Obviously I’m pleased that he’s happy with our installation and service, and we’re glad he brought the 66 Block install detail to our attention. But that story doesn’t surprise me. From the big picture to the smaller details, we create customized solutions that are in our customers’ best interests—not those that are necessarily most convenient for us.”



tw telecom has offices in 80 major metro areas

About **tw telecom**

tw telecom, headquartered in Littleton, Colo., is a leading national provider of managed services, including Business Ethernet, converged and IP VPN solutions for enterprises throughout the U.S. and to their global locations. **tw telecom** also delivers secure, scalable private connections for transport data networking, Internet access, voice, VPN, VoIP and security to large organizations and communications services companies. Employing a resilient fiber network infrastructure, robust product portfolio and its own Intelligent Network capabilities, **tw telecom** delivers customers overall economic value, an industry-leading quality service experience, and improved business productivity.

About **TBA**

The Tennessee Bankers Association is a not-for-profit organization representing all of Tennessee’s commercial banks and thrift institutions. The association provides continuing education, develops and monitors state and federal legislative agendas, disseminates information on all facets of the financial services industry, and promotes the public image of financial institutions. Please visit them at their website, www.TNBankers.org, for more information.