



Safety Net

AT&T's innovative Voice DNAsm hosted IP solution keeps a Missouri community connected—no matter what.

About the City of Gladstone

When it comes to great places to live, Gladstone, Mo. has it all: good schools, lovely tree-lined streets and citizens who care about their community. In fact, in 2008 this Kansas City suburb won one of the 10 All-America City Awards given by the National Civic League. Yet Gladstone also has one other distinction that its nearly 28,000 residents would rather do without: It has been hit with two major tornadoes in the past five years, including a category F4 twister that touched down in May 2003 and destroyed almost 400 homes and caused nearly \$30 million in damage. Vulnerability to these natural disasters means the City of Gladstone needs a dependable communications network that allows city officials to respond quickly and coordinate rescue efforts with little or no downtime.

Situation

Like most municipalities across the country, Gladstone has a limited budget. So when it was time to upgrade the city's 10-year-old phone system last year, city finance director Debra Daily knew that finding cutting-edge technology at a price within their budget would be a tall order. "I wanted a fully integrated system," she says, "but it had to be one that wouldn't require us to hire extra IT people to maintain and upgrade it."

The system also had to be able to withstand whatever Mother Nature threw its way. When the 2003 tornado struck, Gladstone lost phone service and didn't have a system capable of rerouting calls to unaffected phone lines. "It was extremely difficult to get a handle on the extent of the damage in the early hours of the storm," explains AT&T account manager Shelley Martasin. "City hall, the fire department and the department of public works all operated with different phone numbers, and officials were unable to transfer calls from one building to another." In planning for the new system, a key component was ensuring that citizens would not lose communications with the city in the event of future disasters.

Solution

After researching the options, Daily and Gladstone's IT manager Steve Rodhouse decided that what they needed was Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). The technology converts voice or fax calls into data packets that are then transmitted over the AT&T Private IP Network. The advantage of VoIP, explains Martasin, is that it provides all-important redundancy in Gladstone's network. If the phone service goes down in one location, calls are redirected to another number by simply making the change on the online AT&T Business Direct Web Portal, thus aiding the city with security and disaster planning.

Although the concept of VoIP made sense for Gladstone, Daily had some concerns. First, she did not want to make a

City of Gladstone Facts

- **Business Needs**
Dependable phone service designed to withstand the severe weather conditions that sometimes strike the city
- **Networking Solutions**
An integrated, hosted VoIP system that allows city officials to remotely reroute calls when needed
- **Business Value**
Hosted VoIP offers Gladstone a reliable, cost-effective communications network
- **Industry Focus**
Local government
- **Size**
Nearly 28,000 residents

capital investment in equipment she knew would eventually become obsolete. In addition, Daily didn't want to burden the IT staff with the additional responsibilities of managing the new phone system.

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—Debra Daily, City Finance Director, Gladstone, Mo.

Then Martasin and the AT&T account team proposed an option that would meet the needs of the city and its budget. Rather than buying all of the necessary equipment outright, AT&T offered Gladstone a managed—or hosted—VoIP solution. In this scenario, the network equipment would reside at the AT&T data center where it would be maintained and monitored 24/7. “The city looked at other vendors offering a similar arrangement,” Rodhouse says, “but none of them

seemed to have the technology and service that AT&T could deliver.”

This arrangement immediately appealed to Daily. With the hosted VoIP technology, Gladstone could get the network up and running for a fraction of what it would cost to purchase its own system. The city pays a monthly service fee, equivalent to the cost of its former phone service. In addition, AT&T provides its Internet access. “The hosted solution gives us so much more flexibility,” Daily says.

The True Test

AT&T's solution for Gladstone was put to the test during the early hours of May 2, 2008, when a tornado swept through the city, bringing down power lines and damaging buildings. An AT&T terminal box was also damaged, cutting phone service to much of Gladstone. But with the Voice DNASM solution, one member of the city's IT staff was able to use his home computer to remotely reroute all the city's calls to a number at the department of public works building that had escaped damage. “The AT&T VoIP solution made communication so much more reliable this time,” Daily says. “With the new system, the citizens of Gladstone can call the city for help without any service interruption, and we can respond quickly.”

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