



Putting fans first

Founded in 1933, the Pittsburgh Steelers are the fifth-oldest franchise in the National Football League and have won six Super Bowl championships—the most in NFL history. Their fiercely loyal fanbase turns out in full force on game day, putting the demand for reliable network bandwidth and voice communications on par with the demand for basic utilities such as electricity or running water. With Windstream Enterprise providing the service they need to handle overwhelming voice and data traffic, the Steelers can deliver the best experience possible for every fan—and every teammate behind the scenes who's working to make it happen.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

Industry

Professional sports/entertainment

Customer

Major NFL franchise

Headquartered in Pittsburgh, PA

Challenges

Meeting game-day service needs

On-demand phone line installation

Guaranteeing bandwidth and speed

Solutions

Basic Business Lines (BBLs)

TDM Voice Services

Dedicated Internet Services

Point-to-Point (P2P) and Ethernet

Results

Premium fan experience

Network stability and reliability

Saving time for coaching staff

On game day and beyond

“As you can imagine, game day at Heinz Field at 1 o'clock on a Sunday turns to slight chaos,” says Scott Phelps, vice president of technology for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Maximum capacity in the stadium sits at around 68,400 people, including everyone from the seats to the suites and the standing room in between. As one of the NFL's most well-established and successful franchises, the Steelers recognize as much as anyone that the definition of “fan experience” has changed over time.

Modern fans are more engaged than ever with their favorite team, especially online. They're sharing content, tracking stats, and endlessly debating roster decisions no matter which day of the week it is. It's a continuous conversation with game day at the center, making it crucial for the Steelers to support the extensive, interconnected team of people creating that experience.

One of the team's biggest communication needs is the on-demand installation of new phone lines. Temporary offices requiring these lines are often set up in advance of game days for opposing teams, as well as the broadcasters who work out of the stadium. The Steelers also require provisioned lines to ensure ATMs are working and available for fans who need quick access to cash and can't wait.

The lineup of players involved in the fan experience is a deep one, and downtime or outages for anyone could easily send the entire game the wrong way. “As an organization, we put the fans first,” reaffirms Phelps. “It's important to provide the best services we can to those fans, as well as our vendors and partners.”

Not just phoning it in

The team's history with Windstream Enterprise dates back to 2004 and includes a variety of products and services that range from Basic Business Lines (BBLs) to dedicated Internet services and Ethernet connections between facilities. "Without the services primarily provided by Windstream Enterprise, game day would come to a halt," says Phelps.

In particular, provisioning and swapping phone lines on demand—sometimes at a moment's notice—isn't something every service partner would be up for. With TDM Voice Services, which are critical for broadcasters, the Steelers take advantage of the white-glove Windstream Enterprise approach referred to as "game-day services." Windstream Enterprise keeps an inventory of game-day-only lines that can be assigned on demand in different parts of the stadium. They also commit a consistent, experienced roster of onsite technicians leading up to (and during) game day to provide continuous service and manage any line coordination that comes up unexpectedly.

High-speed Internet services also play a critical role in the overall fan experience, whether you're on the grass at Heinz Field or on the move at one of the team's other locations. On-field photographers, for example, need a reliable connection during games so they can upload shots from the middle of the action: content that will be critical in the subsequent media coverage appearing online and in print for fans who couldn't attend. The experience also continues with wireless access in the FedEx Great Hall, where fans can share their own photos online as they walk through a localized hall of fame that showcases historic Steelers moments.

Of course, nothing makes for a better fan experience than seeing a winning team. With only six days to prep for upcoming games, every minute counts for NFL coaches. Previously, the team's video staff had to physically transport footage from each game at Heinz Field to a separate facility where it would be processed for coaching staff to analyze. Now, that trip's no longer necessary.

Point-to-point Ethernet gives the Steelers a secure connection to share video between locations and saves major minutes on the clock. "It means faster turnaround times for our video staff and our coaching staff—a lot more seamless," explains Phelps. "They've really changed the way we operate as a football team, frankly."

A new definition of fan service

The strength of the Steelers' partnership with Windstream Enterprise comes from a shared belief that great fan and customer experiences are built on common ground: going above and beyond to deliver what they need, when they need it. Whether it's a white-glove solution, onsite support or temporary phone lines installed on the fly, the two organizations share a key belief. They're both willing to do whatever it takes to make sure the people they serve always come first.

"They take the onus off you."

For Phelps, that added support is what sets Windstream Enterprise apart and why he'll continue to turn to them as new challenges emerge in the future. "I would recommend Windstream Enterprise to my counterparts across the league specifically because they take the onus off you," he explains. "For any future upgrades for the Pittsburgh Steelers' technology department, my first call would be with Windstream Enterprise."

About Windstream Enterprise

Windstream Enterprise collaborates with businesses across the U.S. to drive digital transformation by delivering solutions that solve today's most complex networking and communication challenges.

To learn more about
Windstream Enterprise, visit
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