Strong design principles at work

Goodwyn Mills and Cawood (GMC) is a firm dedicated to more than designing office buildings, schools, hospitals and hotels. They adhere firmly to the belief that 'communities are built by people, not companies' and their highly-qualified professionals collaborate across disciplines to ensure a superior design for each individual client and project. Such teamwork requires an equally superior network, and when GMC's became a flaw in their process, they turned to Windstream Enterprise to design a solution.

GOODWYN MILLS AND CAWOOD

Industry

Professional Services: Architecture/Engineering

Customer

Founded 1947; privately-held firm

Headquarters in Montgomery, AL

One of largest Southeastern architecture firms in U.S.

425 employees; 16 offices across 5 states

Network Challenges

Lack of reliability

Slow performance

Increasing network complexity

Solutions

SD-WAN	Cloud Connect
MPLS	Cloud-based Firewall

Results

Fully managed solution

Increased performance

More access to cloud apps

Improved productivity

Increased uptime

Unnecessary complexity

As a major architecture and engineering firm spanning five Southeastern states, technology is integral to Goodwyn Mills and Cawood, a "collaborative organization driven by the power of building better, happier, healthier, thriving communities." It's an ambitious vision, and when the technology they relied upon failed to make sure all people across all offices were connected and able to easily communicate and share resources, GMC's Vice President of Technology Mario Galloway and his team of two knew that finding a solution was their number one priority.

Standing in their way was a multi-location network that consisted of different technologies from multiple providers that was loosely integrated. In addition to their underlying MPLS network, GMC had 10 small offices connected via cable with VPN connectivity to the main office in Montgomery. Network management became a complex issue dealing with routing, IPS tunnels, frequent outages and no back-up.

This lack of transport integration and backup had an impact on workflow as well. The files were on centralized, in-house servers so while they were available to all employees at once, network slowness created issues for the team. "Frequent outages and concerns about data security were seriously impacting our ability to share information between locations. I had to know that if something happened that we could recover quickly without loss of critical data."

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A solid foundation

During a meeting with Windstream Enterprise, it became clear that migration of their data applications to the cloud would solve many of the most pressing problems for the firm. It was more secure, accessible and with the right network enhancements like SD-WAN, GMC would eliminate the complexity that Galloway and his team faced every day. Upon seeing it demonstrated, Windstream Enterprise's SD-WAN Concierge™ gained Galloway's immediate interest.

An unexpected bonus was GMC's existing largely Windstream Enterprise MPLS network. "We looked at other options, but SD-WAN stood out. It was a good fit and a huge deal that SD-WAN could be added over the top of our existing MPLS and cable network to create a hybrid WAN at a very reasonable cost." Because SD-WAN works over the top of their MPLS, GMC can implement migration on their own timeline and no 'rip and replace' is required.

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With SD-WAN as a fully-managed solution, Galloway also gained valuable visibility into the network's performance—without the responsibility for managing the complexity that had consumed so much of his and his team's time. The Windstream Enterprise team also proposed Cloud Connect to ensure that GMC's data would be safe and secure in a cloud environment vs. stored on in-house servers that were subject to outages and potential loss. In addition to the cloud-based firewalls GMC was using to protect their MPLS locations, they have added cloud-based firewalls to the locations where SD-WAN provides network services over the top of cable.

Form matches function

Since implementing, Galloway is enjoying the benefits of SD-WAN's managed solution. Network stability, greater bandwidth and uptime have been the biggest benefits so far. Galloway has visibility into the network performance, and if an issue arises, he knows that Windstream Enterprise will troubleshoot the problem and work it through to resolution, as well as perform regular system maintenance to keep the problem from recurring. This has eliminated Galloway's day-to-day management of the network and has freed him and his time to focus on more strategic technology issues facing the business.

Companywide, employees have noticed the difference in network performance. Galloway estimates that he's seeing 30-40% fewer trouble tickets and when investigating finds that the issue is more likely to be user error rather than the network.

Productivity is also improving thanks to these changes. Regardless of what office they're in, employees can get the files faster and with less delay due to higher speeds and network uptime, and thanks to the cloud storage, employees are able to access files versus transferring them locally for a more secure and efficient use of resources. Beyond that, GMC is making greater use of cloud-based applications and is in the process of moving their CAD license server to the cloud. Thanks to SD-WAN over MPLS and Cloud Connect, GMC is well on their way to "building [the] better, happier, healthier, thriving communities" they envision.