



Customer experience tops the menu at casual eatery

Consistency is one of the trademarks of brand longevity. For a highly-recognizable brand that's defined casual dining for half a century, providing guests with great food and service across decades speaks volumes about their commitment to the overall customer experience. When network outages and concerns about data security threatened to damage their hard-earned reputation, they knew that serious changes were necessary to bring the digital experience to life within their restaurants.

At a glance

Industry

Casual dining restaurant

Customer

U.S. corporation/global franchise

300+ U. S. locations

Challenges

Frequent network outages

Multiple vendors

WiFi not meeting CX needs

Solutions

SD-WAN

Secure WiFi

Professional Services

MPLS & Broadband

Managed Network Security

UCaaS

Managed Switches

Results

Single-source provider

Increased network reliability and productivity

Improved performance, visibility and reporting

Too many cooks

As successful restaurants today know, it's not just about the food anymore. Ultimately, people are going to the establishment to eat or drink, but more and more, customers view a restaurant's digital offerings as an appetizer to the overall guest experience. According to a recent survey, "As guest expectations for digital-driven dining continue to rise, all those responsible for delivering a successful guest experience, must rapidly adopt new digital technologies to enhance the entire dining journey."¹

The company understood that protecting the brand and providing technology that would enhance the customer experience and drive revenue was a top priority. The responsibility for making those improvements fell to the IT team. With hundreds of locations across the country, the network consisted of multiple vendors and different technologies, often lacking redundancy. As the IT team described it, "Network outages became

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Refreshed menu

The company had a vision to improve the guest experience by deploying a network that would enable real-time order entry and credit card transactions via servers' tablets, while also providing guest WiFi service. The solution had to include performance, security and resiliency to maximize uptime.

The IT team saw the answer in a streamlined, unified network managed by a single provider in which every restaurant was configured the same way. Windstream Enterprise installed high-availability SD-WAN with dual access, MPLS and broadband, at each location, with cloud-based firewalls to protect both WAN connections. With high-availability SD-WAN and dual access they now have an active/active configuration with dynamic failover that has virtually eliminated downtime. The SD-WAN also supports UCaaS (unified communications as a service), for a complete phone solution, and Secure WiFi service—both from Windstream Enterprise.

One of the key differentiators for Windstream Enterprise was the ability to provide more than just the technological aspects of the solution. Windstream Enterprise's Professional Services team took the time to understand business priorities before implementing a solution

that included installation and cabling for phones and WiFi. Improvements to their WiFi system have been critical to improving the guest experience. With WiFi, the restaurant captures important information and preferences about the guest by leveraging marketing analytics technology and can use that data to offer future rewards programs such as discounts and other perks for high-value customers.

Tasteful results

With Windstream Enterprise as a partner, the restaurant achieved the goal of one service provider to manage everything network related, as well as handle all issues and ancillary equipment, including switches and CPE. Windstream Enterprise established an equipment depot so that any CPE could be easily replaced on the same day if necessary. Having a single service provider ensured every restaurant was configured the same way, the help desk now provides a consistent level of support.

Best of all, the IT team is very pleased with the result. "SD-WAN has outperformed our expectations. Since implementing SD-WAN, we've seen network performance uptime improve dramatically, and we estimate that repair tickets have been reduced by about 90%." At the same time, the improved network function has freed the IT



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staff to shift from emergency network management and repairs to focus on strategic enhancements that utilize the new SD-WAN and WiFi capabilities to drive revenue and retain customers. The company is also increasing its use of the cloud with about 25% of their applications now cloud-based, and more planned as they decommission collocated applications.

Down the road, the company sees Windstream Enterprise as a partner as they look to for implementing a new PCI-compliant POS (point of sale) system and serving up additional features to enhance the customer experience.

1. Excerpted from October 18, 2018 BRP report Restaurant Digital Crossroads: The Race to Meet Guest Expectations, accessed via <https://brpconsulting.com/tag/guest-expectations/>.

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 windstreamenterprise.com

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