



# Grocery merchant implements connectivity and unified communications solutions to improve IT resiliency, connection speed and network security

Bargain Barn, operating grocery stores under the United Grocery brand name, sells almost everything found in a typical supermarket. They specialize in handling inventory imbalances, closeouts, packaging changes, close-dated products, factory seconds and trial-run products. United Grocery Outlet was running their 40-plus locations on legacy networks and phone systems. They needed a reliable, dedicated, single-partner solution to upgrade and modernize their technology and security that could be implemented rapidly and customized without overburdening their IT staff.

## At a glance



### Industry

Grocery Merchant

### Customer

40+ locations across six U.S. states

900+ employees

### Challenges

Outdated legacy technology systems

Managing too many vendors

Overburdened IT team

### Solutions

SD-WAN

Managed Network Security

LAN Services

OfficeSuite UC

WE Connect

### Results

Reliable and resilient connectivity

Centralized management portal

Reduced outages

Increased security

Low-stress single-vendor solution

Eased burden on IT staff

## Greater resiliency and control

United Grocery Outlet has retail locations in Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia and Alabama. The company was operating on a legacy network with unreliable and expensive T1 lines. They had limited bandwidth with no automated resiliency and suffered frequent outages, during which stores couldn't process credit card payments. There was a high volume of customer trouble tickets from stores with network outages.

Further, the company needed more visibility and control of their legacy network, as they had depended on previous vendors for troubleshooting and resolution. The company was managing all the access circuits from many different vendors, which was time-consuming for their IT team.

United Grocery Outlet decided to partner with Windstream Enterprise, which replaced their legacy network with an SD-WAN solution. Windstream Enterprise replaced United Grocery Outlet stores' existing network access lines with primary cable broadband connections and secondary cellular broadband connections configured in an active/backup mode so that failover is instantaneous if the primary circuit ever goes down. The management burden was also eliminated with Windstream Enterprise fully managing all access connections.

A United Grocery Outlet objective was to maximize in-store network uptime, and company leaders are happy with the results. Downtime has been significantly reduced by implementing SD-WAN. Now, the company's IT team spends far less time fielding trouble tickets for network and voice issues.

***“Windstream Enterprise helped us modernize our IT infrastructure and meet our objective to maximize uptime.”***

**Michael Sola**  
Director of IT, United Grocery Outlet

## Faster network connections

The company's legacy phone system on Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS) lines was unreliable with frequent outages. United Grocery Outlet tapped Windstream Enterprise for OfficeSuite UC® and cordless phones at United Grocery Outlet locations. The OfficeSuite phone system is more reliable, with improved uptime compared to previous POTS lines.

Eliminating both T1 network lines and POTS lines for voice calls resulted in significant savings for the company. In fact, the total cost of the modernized network, security and voice solution from Windstream Enterprise was about the same as the cost of United Grocery Outlet's previous legacy network solution.

With the WE Connect portal, the United Grocery Outlet IT team now has complete visibility of their services, enabling staff to track performance, troubleshoot issues and take corrective action. They also have access to a Windstream Enterprise Technical Service Manager to help them manage the network.

"There were cost savings from partnering with Windstream Enterprise, which was a big factor," says Michael Sola, Director of IT at United Grocery Outlet. "Our CFO is constantly looking at the numbers before we would commit to anything. So the fact that we were able to bring in this SD-WAN solution at almost the same price, if not less than what we were paying before, was a huge plus for us. But the main driver was to get a reliable ISP service with good redundancy—and the added benefit to this process was better cybersecurity protection."

## Top-notch cybersecurity

United Grocery Outlet's legacy security relied on a centralized firewall that created network congestion, as all traffic had to be backhauled to and from the data center.

United Grocery Outlet implemented Windstream Enterprise's cloud-based Managed Network Security (MNS) solution to upgrade and modernize their security. Windstream Enterprise now provides advanced security features for all internet

traffic across all United Grocery Outlet locations, protecting the company from cyberthreats, and the upgrades eliminated the need to backhaul traffic.

The company's legacy network switches, which connected all their devices to the internet, including point-of-sale (POS) systems, time clocks and back-office PCs, lacked payment card industry (PCI) compliance. United Grocery Outlet had previously purchased switches, and the significant capital expense to replace them was an issue.

New PCI-complaint cloud-managed switches from Windstream Enterprise provide the security required for all of United Grocery Outlet's internet-connected devices. The company deployed Windstream Enterprise switches as a monthly recurring operating expense, thus avoiding the upfront capital expense they would incur to purchase them.

## Achieving strategic objectives

Previously, United Grocery Outlet stores lacked WiFi to support HQ-based staff with connectivity while away from their desktop computers. Many stores are in rural areas, so connecting laptops and mobile devices to the internet was challenging.

Windstream Enterprise installed new secure WiFi devices in all United Grocery Outlet stores to enable HQ-based employees visiting United Grocery Outlet locations to connect to the network and access corporate applications, including their email. In addition, human resources (HR) personnel can now conduct online training sessions in-store. Management has heard positive feedback from corporate staff, as they appreciate now being able to visit United Grocery Outlet

stores and conduct business without interruption thanks to WiFi connectivity.

Another one of the company's objectives was to eliminate multiple vendors and have a single service provider to manage the entire IT environment. Partnering with Windstream Enterprise fulfilled that objective.

"We've had great interactions with the Windstream Enterprise support teams, and it's been a wonderful working relationship," Sola says. "Windstream Enterprise treats us as a partner, not just a customer."

***"With Windstream Enterprise, we were able to consolidate from multiple vendors to just a single partner for network, voice, security and access."***

**Michael Sola**  
Director of IT, United Grocery Outlet

---

Our managed connectivity, communications and security solutions are innovative. Your business outcomes are imperative.

To learn more, visit [windstreamenterprise.com](https://www.windstreamenterprise.com)

**WINDSTREAM  
ENTERPRISE**