WE

Credit union banks on a better network experience

As a member-owned, not-for-profit financial institution, this southern-based credit union is committed to making a difference in the communities they serve. But with a growing list of 15+ branches, both their sluggish network and their inability to quickly onboard new branches started to negatively impact their commitment to deliver excellent service to their member base.

At a glance

Industry	
Banking	
Customer	
15+ branch locations	
Challenges	
Lack of bandwidth to support new locations	
Network downtime and no resiliency	
Network management complexity	
Rising network costs	
Solutions	
SD-WAN	
Managed Security	
WE Connect	
Wavelength Services	
Dynamic IP voice	
Cellular Broadband	
Results	
Increased bandwidth and app performance	
Eliminated network outages	
Simplified network management	
Gained better visibility	
Optimized costs	

Membership has its rewards

The credit union's senior vice president (SVP) of IT infrastructure has numerous responsibilities that run the gamut from cloud and internet services and employee workstations to essential core banking systems. And with the organization in growth mode, he's always looking for ways to better serve members through improved processes, while keeping costs in check. Recognizing that the organization's existing MPLS connection didn't offer adequate redundancy to ensure 100% uptime—and that adding new locations was cumbersome and costly—he began assessing options that would allow the organization to better serve its membership base and take some of the burden off the internal IT team.

Taking account of challenges

Even as the largest credit union in the state, growth is a high priority, but adding new branches is always a highly complex activity. The SVP was certain that more bandwidth would not only solve this issue but also improve the customer experience by better supporting the organization's growing number of cloud applications. The biggest barrier was the recurring price tag.

As the SVP relayed, "Adding more MPLS bandwidth would significantly increase monthly costs, and some issues would still remain."

The primary firewall in their data center was also a concern. It slowed down service both online and in branches as it backhauled all internet traffic and often competed for bandwidth with business-critical core banking systems.

> *"Windstream Enterprise is a trusted partner and enables us to deliver 100% uptime for our members."*
>
> **SVP**
> IT Infrastructure

Finally, voice communications used to contact members were lacking as they were dependent on the network. Limited bandwidth impacted voice quality, and when the network failed, so did the phones. The SVP knew something had to change to be able to deliver great service to their members.

Accruing a high-performing solution

The credit union's SVP determined that a fully managed SD-WAN solution with proactive 24/7 support from skilled experts was the best option for a consistent customer experience. It would address bandwidth and network outage pain points, as well as communication glitches—all while giving his team the always-on support they desired. Windstream Enterprise fit the bill.

The Windstream Enterprise team replaced all MPLS connections with high-bandwidth fiber and used cable broadband or Cellular Broadband as secondary connections in an active/active configuration. This gave the credit union the flexibility to keep their existing cable connections at some locations.

Additionally, high-bandwidth Wavelength Services were used to connect their primary and secondary data centers, and Windstream deployed cloud-based Managed Security at all locations for enhanced security. Voice communications were improved with the use of Dynamic IP voice services that traverse the SD-WAN for all internal communications.

Checking the balance sheet

The results speak for themselves. SD-WAN simplified the process for connecting new branch locations to both the corporate network and core banking systems. It has even enabled new services for members, like video conference consults with investment and insurance experts.

Not only have network outages been eliminated, but during the pandemic, SD-WAN bandwidth supported virtual meetings both internally and with members.

App performance also improved, increasing employee productivity and improving the member experience. Even the organization's retail and commercial business leaders concur that the network enhancements have greatly enabled their branch sales teams and commercial bankers to service members and capture the information they need to provided a more personalized experience.

IT staff are regular users of the WE Connect portal and value the co-management features that enable them to make their own changes. And while they also use WE Connect to track performance, conduct research and open and manage tickets, they depend on Windstream Enterprise to manage the access vendors and remove that burden from their internal team.

The SVP also appreciates what he calls "cost avoidance." That is, their monthly costs didn't go up, despite the addition of new network and voice solutions, increased bandwidth and failsafe redundancy that allows for fewer network outages.

"Essentially, SD-WAN offers the same costs as MPLS, but with way more benefits," he says.

Giving credit where credit's due

Overall, the high-performing suite of solutions has exceeded the expectations of the credit union, and they are back to being confident in delivering a best-in-class experience for their customers.

"Windstream Enterprise is a trusted partner and enables us to deliver 100% uptime for our members," says the SVP. And that's a promise they can take to the bank.

> *"The WE Connect portal delivers the co-management capabilities to let us control our network."*
>
> **SVP**
> IT Infrastructure

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