



Success Story

THE J.R. SIMPLOT COMPANY

When the Potato King wanted to upgrade their network, AFS asked “You want fries with that?”

Customer

Based in Boise, Idaho, the J.R. Simplot Company is one of the largest privately held companies in the world. With 12,000 employees in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Australia, Simplot earns \$3 billion in annual revenue from food, fertilizer, turf and horticulture.

In addition to being one of the nation’s largest beef cattle producers, Simplot produces 3 million pounds of potato products each year, making them the largest manufacturer of McDonald’s French fries worldwide.

Business Challenge

Like many companies in their industry, Simplot managed a decentralized telecom network made up of various T1s, DS3s and OC3s. Information was backed-up and stored using the time-consuming and costly magnetic tapes. Network Technology Manager, Mark Sachs, and his team quickly recognized the need to upgrade their network.

High on the IT team’s wish list was the desire for faster, more reliable connectivity between sites. Ease of use for end-users and optimal redundancy drove the IT team to search for an improved MAN solution that would provide expanded capacity in Boise to tie all of their offices together. Wanting to leverage trends such as web conferencing and online meetings, Simplot needed an updated network that would allow them to quickly and easily increase their bandwidth without the aggravation of major construction, downtime or disruptions.

As a next step, the JR Simplot Network team began identifying potential vendors. According to Sachs, AFS was a natural consideration for the next solution because of the company’s commitment to his team and their process. “AFS has always been strong in three areas: honesty, pricing and technical expertise,” he explained.

Simplot issued a request for proposal (RFP) to ensure an equitable and simultaneous comparison and analysis of competing carriers’ products and service offerings. “Our main criteria included the following: Which solution would service our end users in the best possible way, provide technical expertise 24x7x365 and also give us the best value for our dollar?” Sachs said.

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“We don’t consider AFS to be a vendor. Instead, they are a strategic partner in our future network planning. We value their input, insightfulness and honesty.”

— *Mark Sachs, network technology manager, The J.R. Simplot Company*

The AFS Solution

Following the diligent three-month RFP process, Sachs and his team decided to partner with AFS once again. The new solution includes an Ethernet ring between four main sites. AFS also displaced previous T1s and DS3s for inter-office voice and connectivity.

AFS's local network operation center (NOC) was a driving factor in providing the necessary communication and accessibility between Simplot sites, AFS circuits and support teams.

"The AFS technical team always answers our questions in a very quick time frame, which allows us to rule out potential issues and determine options so we can properly plan," Sachs explained. "They understand the critical nature of our service and are completely committed to both myself and the company."

In addition, the AFS connection proved so reliable, the previous tape back-up system was replaced with a SAN, allowing the team to copy data directly to disk housed in Simplot's secondary data center.

The installation process involved collaborative teamwork from day one. The transition was "a smooth conversion," Sachs said. "Response times continue to be excellent. The user community experienced a seamless transition with no issues. From a customer-vendor relationship, we feel AFS has exceeded our expectations," he said.

Benefits

The Simplot team's proactive approach to ensure network speed, robust and scalable connectivity and a centralized MAN and SAN solution paid off.

"As we projected, there have been many new applications," said Sachs. "Our IT team was able to put use to the network and support the new bandwidth needs."

With AFS's help, Sachs and his team successfully created a redundant metro area network that is faster and more reliable, while costing significantly less. The scalable network now allows for future growth and simplified upgrading capabilities that alleviate end-user conversion issues.

Other benefits for Simplot include:

- More than 25% savings by switching from a standalone solution to the AFS centralized model
- Additionally, greater than 15% savings by switching from the previous OC3 to AFS Ethernet ring
- Support of AFS's Metro Ethernet over Fiber service and their local engineer's knowledge of Boise network practices

About American Fiber Systems

American Fiber Systems (AFS) provides metropolitan fiber optical networking infrastructure, dark fiber and transport services to carriers and large enterprises. AFS enables its customers to easily and reliably connect to a city's most important points of communications presence, including central offices and wire centers; CLEC PoPs; Internet Service Provider (ISP) and data center locations; Inter-exchange "carrier-hotels;" wireless providers. AFS has deployed more

than 1.2 million miles of high-capacity, high-bandwidth metropolitan fiber optic cable since 2000 in several cities, including Atlanta, Boise, Cleveland, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Minneapolis/Saint Paul, Nashville, Reno, Carson City, and Salt Lake City. AFS has more than 500 capacity enabled on-net buildings and supports an addressable market teledensity of more than \$9 billion in annualized telecommunications services. AFS is a privately held venture-backed company.