



Putting pen to paper: How Kelly Spicers future-proofed their network with SD-WAN

For wholesale distributor Kelly Spicers, everything looked good on paper. The company successfully built a strong reputation around their boundless knowledge, customer centricity and dependability as a long-term partner. But behind the scenes, they were combating inadequate bandwidth attributed to their legacy MPLS network. When it became clear it was time to upgrade their outdated network, they trusted Windstream Enterprise to carry through the modernized solutions that would enable the reliable connectivity to match their reputation.

At a glance



Industry

Wholesale Distributor Paper Products

Customer

50 locations in the Western U.S.

5th generation family-owned business

Challenges

Legacy Network issues

Inadequate bandwidth

Lack of redundancy

Expensive

Solutions

SD-WAN Concierge

Ethernet primary access

Cable & Fixed Wireless secondary access

Managed Network Services – cloud

Results

Increased productivity

Smoother business operations

Reliable voice services

Simplified management

Significant cost savings

The tear-able truth about outdated network services

With 50 locations across the Western U.S. and Hawaii, Kelly Spicers is committed to distributing the broadest selection of paper, packaging, wide format and facilities solutions products—along with delivering the best customer service. They are an independent, privately held company with a rich history full of long-standing relationships with customers, suppliers and the communities in which they operate.

Given its position as an industry leader, Kelly Spicers prides themselves on providing high touch service and for being a knowledgeable and reliable long-term partner. Fulfilling this reputation requires an equally dependable network that guarantees seamless connectivity across all locations in order to best serve every single one of their customers, regardless of location or size.

Jon Whittaker, CIO of Kelly Spicers, recognized that their antiquated network solutions were not going to cut it. The legacy MPLS with T1 connections didn't

provide enough bandwidth to support their primary ERP system, along with the growing number of cloud-based applications, like Office 365, e-commerce and reporting systems.

Inadequate bandwidth resulted in slow application performance and ultimately a poor end-user experience. It was an ongoing issue their small IT team of seven were eager to solve.

“Windstream Enterprise has been an excellent partner for many, many years. They always seem to understand what we want, and they help us achieve it.”

Jon Whittaker, CIO, Kelly Spicers

Furthermore, their network had no backup in place and many remote locations had limited options for secondary access connections. When a location had an outage, a manual handwritten process was needed to take orders for processing later.

Above all else, the existing network was on expensive T1 circuits. It was unaffordable to add more circuits for higher bandwidth, which enabled the company to become an early adopter of Software-Defined Wide-Area Network (SD-WAN) technology.

Jon acknowledged the need for a centralized, uniform and cohesive network. “We need the consistency of it,” he remarked.

When it was time to upgrade their legacy network, Kelly Spicers turned to Windstream Enterprise, whom they share a 13-year relationship with, to confidently make it happen. They did so without considering any other managed service providers.

“We are not about being the most cutting edge in technology, said Jon. “We are about the distribution of paper and doing business the way our customers want to do business.”

That’s why Kelly Spicers leaned on Windstream Enterprise as a partner, advisor and single point of contact to assist with the migration and management of the technology moving forward.

Following the paper trail to a modernized network

To solve for Kelly Spicers’ network performance problems and help ensure reliability and redundancy across all locations, the partnership chose SD-WAN Concierge as their new network standard for their 50 locations. They did this with active/active configurations to deliver the bandwidth required for current and future application usage.

Implementation ensured that primary connections were fiber and secondary connections were a combination of broadband cable and fixed wireless, all of which would be fully managed by Windstream Enterprise. Fixed wireless supports 20 locations that couldn’t be served by cable. These solutions would solve for the redundancy that Kelly Spicers’ previous network was lacking at a much more cost-effective price point.

This new fully managed network solution would accompany the cloud-based Managed Network Security (MNS) by Windstream Enterprise that Kelly Spicers already had in place. The customer relies on MNS to protect their network and data from cyberattacks, a threat that is aggressively growing in number and complexity throughout all industries.

MNS proved to be particularly beneficial during the global pandemic, when everything and everyone were forced to go remote. “It would’ve been extremely difficult without having MNS,” said Jon.

A clean sheet

For Kelly Spicers, regular outages are now a thing of the past. Windstream Enterprise was able to replace the single-threaded MPLS network with cost-effective high bandwidth fiber cable and fixed wireless to provide the redundancy they needed. When one of the access connections fails, the failover to the second connection is so seamless, the location doesn’t even notice.

Increased bandwidth improved the end-user experience, both in terms of employee productivity and customer satisfaction. All cloud-based applications now run smoother, and the SD-WAN also provides the network for their mission-critical voice services.

The partnership has proven to be tremendously valuable to Kelly Spicers. They trust Windstream Enterprise to take the lead on their network and security, enabling their IT team to focus on strategic technology improvements to advance their business. And with access to the WE Connect SD-WAN Management Portal, the team can check in to see how applications are running.

“I trust Windstream Enterprise to fully manage our network and security. It allows our IT team to focus on other technology innovations.”

Jon Whittaker, CIO, Kelly Spicers

According to Jon, “Windstream Enterprise always seems to get it.” And in reference to the long-standing relationship with the managed service provider, “Their greatest strength lies in their people.”

The partnership was a key part of securing Kelly Spicers’ reputation for being reliable and dependable—by providing the network to match.

Cloud-enabled connectivity, communications and security—guaranteed.

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