WE

Eustis Mortgage lends a fast, secure experience to hopeful homeowners

For more than 60 years, Eustis Mortgage has been a family-run business committed to providing exceptional home loan services to clients. But with a growing list of 18 branches across several southern states, managing disparate network and phone systems was becoming a real challenge to fulfilling their purpose of helping clients realize their dreams of home ownership.

At a glance

EUSTIS MORTGAGE
65 YEARS

Industry

Financial

Customer

18 branches

2 HQ locations

Challenges

Legacy network and voice services

Multiple vendors difficult to manage

Lack of resiliency

Solutions

SD-WAN

OfficeSuite UC®

Microsoft Teams integration

Managed Network Security

WE Connect

Results

Reduced costs by 50%

Decreased network outages

Consolidated service providers

Simplified network management

Appraising network and telecom needs

Eustis CIO Ray Rios knew there had to be an easier way. Charged with overseeing the company's voice and network systems, he could see that the hodgepodge of systems and providers they were using was impacting their customer experience. Added to that were issues with outdated physical phones that staff had difficulty using to connect with borrowers, and the costly 5-year telecom agreements Eustis was still obligated to fulfill. Thus started a multi-year mission to simplify their systems with one vendor.

When systems hit their maturity date

The IT issues for Eustis were plenty, but it boiled down to employees not having access to critically important programs to process loan applications in a timely manner. Their legacy network—a combination of MPLS and point-to-point circuits—was complex and cumbersome to manage. That meant when one location's network failed, it was down for an extended period with no visibility and limited ability to fix it. Further, the MPLS was low bandwidth at a high price point, so it really wasn't meeting their needs on many levels.

Another issue was their on-premises voice systems had outdated phones that lacked advanced features and required IT management. Employees found the system cumbersome to use, and many resorted to alternative methods for communication, including Microsoft Teams, adding more traffic to an already busy network.

Finally, Eustis had a centralized on-premises firewall at their New Orleans headquarters that required all Internet traffic to be backhauled from that location. This created congestion on limited bandwidth, making systems across the entire network sluggish—not exactly customer friendly when borrowers are waiting for important decisions on their potential mortgage.

Building equity with the right partner

CIO Ray Rios wasn't looking for just another vendor. He wanted a consultative partner to meet the company's specific IT needs. Windstream Enterprise was able to meet their timelines, budget and overall support needs, and did so with significant month-over-month cost savings.

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>
> **Ray Rios**
> CIO

"We chose Windstream Enterprise based on their ability to quickly and seamlessly manage our migration from legacy services to SD-WAN and OfficeSuite UC," says Rios. "The account team and excellent customer service made the choice an easy one."

The first solution saw Eustis replace the on-premises voice system with OfficeSuite UC and modern phones for all employees, which enables them to easily set up voicemail, call forwarding and conference calls. The new handsets include a Bluetooth wireless feature, allowing staff to stay connected while away from their desks in the office. Other features include the mobile app for personal mobile devices or PCs when working remotely and a fax-to-email feature that supports many borrowers who submit loan applications via fax. Best of all, the WE Connect portal makes it easy for administrators to complete moves, adds and changes without network and customer experience disruption.

After such success implementing OfficeSuite UC, Rios decided to upgrade network systems as well. Eustis deployed SD-WAN at all branch locations via the best available access (often provided by Windstream Enterprise), which offered the flexibility to use existing broadband connections at some branches. For both corporate HQ and regional HQ locations, two circuits in an active/active configuration were deployed for resiliency purposes. Rios also implemented cloud-based Managed Network Security (MNS) at all locations.

Prime rates not only benefit

The migration to updated voice and network solutions has seen Eustis reduce its total spend: "Implementing SD-WAN and OfficeSuite UC has reduced our costs by 50%," Rios says.

Rios also reports that the network is no longer slow and there has been zero network downtime with SD-WAN. "With the redundancy, if there's any kind of network issue our end users often don't even know about it. They continue to work without any interruption in their tasks." And that means the IT team receives significantly fewer trouble tickets for network issues and more time for strategic activities.

The WE Connect portal for SD-WAN was one of the reasons Eustis chose Windstream Enterprise, and the IT team uses the portal to review application and bandwidth usage on a regular basis. It also provides the granularity to drill down and run reports on the app usage of individual PCs, which is a major benefit.

Another benefit Rios appreciates is that with cloud-based MNS at each location there's no need to backhaul traffic to and from a physical device at their HQ. Eustis can now count on the Windstream Enterprise security experts in the Cyber Security Operations Center (CSOC) to monitor and manage their services. With customer data being so important to banking organizations, protecting it is essential to their business and their reputation.

And most recently, Eustis integrated the staff-favorite Microsoft Teams with OfficeSuite UC to significantly enhance employee collaboration with the ability to chat and conduct web meetings. "People love that app and use it all the time," Rios relays.

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Ray Rios
CIO

Celebrating approval

Since the implementations, Rios reports that staff across all departments at Eustis are extremely happy with the upgrades. Sales managers now have confidence to stop by any branch because the network will be up and running 100% of the time, while customer-facing teams can deliver the experiences their customers deserve. And that makes approvals on home loans that much sweeter for both new and repeat homeowners.

For Rios, consolidating to a single vendor like Windstream Enterprise has made his life infinitely easier. "Managing a hodgepodge of systems and vendors took way too much time and cost far too much before," he says. "But we're in a great place now."

Cloud-enabled connectivity, communications and security—guaranteed.