

## **CASE STUDY: C3 TECHNOLOGY ADVISORS WAN ENGAGEMENT WITH GOODRICH QUALITY THEATERS**



Goodrich Quality Theaters (GQT) opened for business in 1930 with a single screen in downtown Grand Rapids, Mich., premiering the highly acclaimed "All Quiet on the Western Front." Today, the company remains headquartered in Grand Rapids and operates a chain of 31 theaters with 288 screens in cities throughout Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Florida.

### **CHALLENGE**

Digital technology has changed the way movies are made, distributed, projected, and marketed. In most cases, studios do not ship film reels to cinemas anymore. Instead, they send films to theaters via satellite or overnight ship a Digital Cinema Package — a hard drive that is slotted into a server that feeds a digital projector. That drove management at GQT to convert all of the company's screens to digital in 2011. The digital revolution has led to other upgrades, as well. For the past few years, the company has been renovating and modernizing its theaters with new point-of-sale (POS), security, surveillance, climate control, card access, and other systems that require a network for connecting various devices, remote access and monitoring. Additionally, GQT's marketing team has become more reliant on digital technology for promotional purposes, frequently sending large files, film trailers, video promotions, and other pre-show content back and forth to theater locations.

These new systems started to choke the company's wide area network (WAN). In addition, the network was also suffering from carrier network outages, which too frequently disrupted internal communications, employee access to centrally stored files, interaction with customers, and credit card processing. GQT's WAN needed an upgrade. That job fell to Darren Pitcher, the company's CIO, and his team of six engineers and administrators.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Pitcher, a 20-year veteran of GQT's IT department, had several objectives as part of his initiative to improve the company's WAN, including:

- Minimizing network outages and improving uptime
- Increasing bandwidth significantly
- Retaining the company's network architecture and firewall
- Adding secondary internet connections at all locations
- Making the network more cloud ready
- Simplifying carrier invoices

### **HOW C3 HELPED**

Goodrich Quality Theaters' IT staff is small and lacked the time and resources needed to fully:

- Create a WAN migration strategy
- Evaluate different kinds of WAN topologies
- Evaluate the dozens of potential providers in the marketplace
- Coordinate vendor meetings
- Negotiate several rounds of pricing
- Implement the new network

C3 was engaged to bring sanity and expertise to the process. Sitting side by side with Darren, C3 created a long list of potential providers for the project. Using the agreed upon criteria, together we whittled the list down to three carriers who fought hard for GQT's business. C3 then worked with the carriers extensively to vet the solutions and worked with the carriers' engineering staffs to ensure that the optimal solution was being proposed, all while negotiating the best rates possible. In the end, Darren picked APX Net, a carrier that is more flexible and cost effective than the existing MPLS provider. And because GQT committed to the C3 process for vendor selection, the professional services fees were even waived.

## THE SOLUTION

C3 and APX Net recommended:

- Upgrading from an MPLS network with 1.5Mbps connections to fiber internet 10M connections or greater at every location except two where bonded T1s were needed to deliver 10M
- Deploying secondary internet connections using cable broadband and DSL, providing failover at every location

***"After having several conversations with the team at APX Net, we had confidence that they understood our needs and their solution was more aligned with our existing network, meaning we would not have to radically rebuild our infrastructure and firewall," said Pitcher.***

APX Net created a migration strategy that factored in expiration dates of location-specific contracts with GQT's existing provider, eliminated double billing and co-managed the implementation with C3 from start to finish. The deployment was complicated by the locations of GQT's theaters in established retail centers. "Some theaters are in malls, which required negotiations with private mall owners to rip up their parking lots and shrubbery to lay fiber. Other locations required mile-long builds or negotiations for pole rights," said Jeff Wood, president of sales for APX Net. The team at APX Net had prior experience overcoming these challenges, making them well-suited to manage the build and installation.

## RESULTS

GQT now has a stable and reliable WAN and significantly more bandwidth. "We're no longer constrained by bottlenecks in our network. We've got a stable, reliable wide area network now that gives us room for growth," said Pitcher. "Every new theater build or renovation seems to bring with it new systems and new solutions that have network requirements, so we're trying to think ahead three, four, and five years and give ourselves some room to grow. I feel like we've got that now."

APX Net also consolidated and simplified billing for GQT's accountants, who were continually confused by invoices from their former providers, which "split up charges into so many pieces and parts that it was hard to know what you were being charged for and what you weren't – almost as if it was on purpose," said Pitcher. "APX Net's simple bills eliminate that confusion, which is much appreciated."

Customer support has also improved compared to previous providers. "We're confident that when we make a call, we're going to get a response. We make one call, and we have tech support working with us — for the few occasions we've actually had to use them," Pitcher said, noting that there's not been a single outage since GQT has been using APX Net's solution.

"We're extremely happy and satisfied with where we're at now," said Pitcher. His level of satisfaction led C3 to work on subsequent projects which included a move of data center operations to one of C3's trusted cloud infrastructure providers.