

Connecting Communities:

LESSONS LEARNED

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ACCESS TO HIGH-SPEED FIBRE INTERNET THAT PROVIDES A RELIABLE CONNECTION FOR HOMES, BUSINESSES AND INSTITUTIONS IS ESSENTIAL TO CREATE A TRULY CONNECTED COMMUNITY.

Today, it's also important that high-speed internet is available across an entire community, instead of sections or markets, such as only residential or businesses. Over my 25+ years of working in US telecom, operations, wireless deployment and construction, I have come to believe there are key factors to consider if a community is to be successfully connected.

AN HOLISTIC APPROACH

When bringing fibre services to a new community, a provider must understand the unique needs of the area and lead with a strong business model, that will provide a successful outcome for both the community and the provider. For some rural communities GPC serves, we're bringing high-speed connectivity for the first time. At the beginning of the project, we start by communicating extensively throughout the town and local council to let them know we're coming, what we offer and provide customer education to those who are new to fibre service explaining how to take full advantage of the high-capacity, high-performance connectivity.

Many communities want a full-service operator who can deliver broadband to their entire town – including school systems, the police and fire departments, hospitals and all homes and businesses.

A provider should consider the needs of each audience and what it entails when servicing residents, connecting businesses, meeting the needs of healthcare and educational institutions and perhaps also offering wholesale services including fibre to the tower



when necessary. In each scenario, there are different methodologies for the telecommunications network topology, whom you engage within the community, along with the time and duration of the build and deployment of services.

An holistic approach - understanding your business and how you can best succeed within each community scenario – is more likely to be successful than a “one size fits all” approach. Not all companies are equipped to provide a multitude of services. Some are successful specialists.

MIDDLE-MILE NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

The “middle mile” is a critical function in the broadband network infrastructure that does not connect directly to the end customer. Still, it enables high-speed and high-capacity data transmission for ISPs and telecom providers, ensuring reliable service over long distances. It aggregates and transports the data traffic to the endpoint that ultimately does connect to the customer. For telecom providers, whether to own or lease this critical section of the network requires thoughtful evaluation.

A provider that owns and manages their own middle mile controls the quality of the service delivered to their customers. However, the network must be continually upgraded to meet changing bandwidth, transport, and emerging technology requirements.

It is vital to evaluate if the cost associated with building out and maintaining the network's middle mile makes economic sense in each location.

RESPOND TO EVERY OUTAGE

Service providers today must recognise that all outages – whether it's fibre to the home, enterprise or wholesale on a weekend or evening – are in fact major outages that require fast response and resolution. A residential outage is no longer merely a minor inconvenience and only a disruption. People's homes are now their workplaces, their classrooms and their connection to services and devices they depend on. Alternate routes and auto-switching networks do help minimise downtime. However, outages must be anticipated, mitigated when possible and resolved quickly if one occurs.

There is a huge appetite for broadband connectivity across entire communities, as opposed to solely one neighbourhood in a town. Each community, whether urban or rural, has specific goals they are trying to reach and pain points they are attempting to resolve. Providers need to engage a model that allows them to think outside the box to deliver the best solution for each unique scenario. Providers must also invest and upgrade their network and middle mile to ensure optimal performance as bandwidth demand continues to rise and technology continues to advance. Finally, as an industry, we must continue to strive for the least amount of downtime - whether it's an interstate connection, middle mile connection or a connection to the school, hospital or home on Main Street.

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