



Jumpstarting a Nationwide Cable Network

Background

TIS welcomed the opportunity to meet the challenges facing the United States' largest cable operator: How to create a new, nationwide ISP network—essentially from scratch? This meant sending crews and site-specific networking equipment to all of the Customer's cable head ends in the United States—over 350 OTN's (optical transport nodes). It was a huge undertaking, involving over two thousand routers, switches, servers, modems and pieces of peripheral equipment from various manufacturers. In addition, the Customer would be cutting over live from an existing network, so conventional field testing and configuration of the hundreds of racks of equipment would be impractical. Based on a pilot project, the Customer knew that something like this normally would take a year. Yet, they had just over four months.

Challenge

The Senior Director of IP Services remembers, "We knew broadband was going to be incredibly important to us on a go-forward basis, so we had to get this network right the first time. The problem was that, we had essentially no time, we had no choice. We just had to turn up the burners and somehow get it done."

Surveying the situation, the Director could see that his team would have to accomplish the impossible. "I knew this would be an unprecedented deployment. We called it 'Project Jumpstart' because we had to jumpstart new, back-end connectivity to the Internet for our entire installed user base—at that time, just over two million customers."

All Internet customers had to be re-pointed to new hardware. And, with tens of millions of dollars of equipment going to 40 different regions in an incredibly short timeframe, a systematic and fool-proof approach was called for.

Solution

The Customer's business was at a crucial inflection point with two million broadband subscribers on the line. Fortunately, they were working with TIS, a company focused exclusively on large-scale, complex information technology deployment.

Soon after TIS began getting information from the hundreds of site surveys, equipment from a wide variety of vendors began arriving at the Company's Staging & Configuration Center. The Customer's Senior Manager of Implementation had tactical responsibility for the deployment. "Basically, all the equipment from the various vendors—from electronics and cables to screws, bolts, and racks—was bulk-shipped to the TIS facility. Once there, TIS utilized the detailed design-and-build materials we gave them—by site, by region, by market."

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Jumpstarting a Nationwide Network *(continued)*

TIS received the equipment, tagged it, catalogued it, and entered it into *eDeploy*™—TIS' Web-based inventory management and project collaboration tool. Then, TIS took the electronics into test beds for burn-in, loading software and operating systems using TIS' proprietary Integrator's Workbench tool for all the configuration management. Each stand-alone combination was tested as a complete system, then packed up, labeled, and shipped to the appropriate destination.

As the pace of the installation began to pick up speed, the value of partnering with TIS became clear. "On a typical Monday, we were landing 70 engineers at various locations throughout the country," recalls the Customer's Manager of Implementation, "I don't even want to think about the cost of those guys stranded, waiting for the right equipment to arrive. It was critical that everything come together, we just couldn't afford any slips in the schedule. It was that way for three months."

The power of *eDeploy* is that it provides customers with access to real-time information about the configuration details, status and location of all their equipment. According to the Manager of Implementation, "*eDeploy* was like a one-stop shop for the team from a deployment standpoint. It was a working repository that held all the data specific to the installation. We all had interface to the same data—it was how we communicated. It was absolutely a fantastic tool."

Results

"Looking back on it now, it's incredible," remembers the Senior Director of IP Services. "From the beginning of the project in October to cutting over the last customer in mid-February, I didn't see my family much. Of course, over at TIS they were working two, sometimes three shifts, shrinking ten-day turnarounds down to one or two."

"They didn't miss a single delivery date," he adds. "That meant we took care of all our customers in time. Bottom line...no one ever lost service. Despite everything that had to go on behind the scenes, it was transparent to our customers. No question, Project Jumpstart was extremely successful and TIS was key to our success. We did the impossible, as far as I'm concerned, and a lot of people in the industry will tell you that."

On the wall in the Senior Director's office is a plaque with a picture of the Apollo 13 astronauts. It was a gift from the Company's President. Under the photo, next to the President's signature, is the inscription: *Failure is not an option...*