Case Study:
Public Utility

GDS delivers a range of **connectivity, communications and managed services** to help a public utility protect its assets and streamline operations.

Partnering with GDS provided this public utility company with the technology solutions to secure critical infrastructure, improve communications, and ensure the performance and reliability of its IT environment over a 20-year period.

Many public utilities are looking to upgrade their IT infrastructure to increase operational efficiency and meet changing customer expectations.

The right technology tools can help utilities manage and secure far-flung physical infrastructure and connect more closely with customers and business partners. Achieving these objectives can be difficult, however. Utilities need highly reliable and secure connectivity and someone to manage it all.

GDS: From Security Partner to Comprehensive Solutions Provider

Global Data Systems serves as that resource for a Louisiana public utility. The relationship began after 9/11 when the utility needed to secure its critical infrastructure. Over time, it has expanded to include a wide range of solutions and services covering voice communications, network security, remote access and more. GDS also monitors and manages the environment to ensure reliability and performance.

Problem

The Department of Homeland Security was created after 9/11, and began focusing on protecting critical infrastructure. The agency mandated that public utilities ensure the physical security of their water supplies and distribution systems.

The utility faced the challenge of monitoring about 70 well sites distributed across remote parts of Louisiana. The mandate was so strict that the utility had to send people onsite to protect the infrastructure if security cameras were unavailable.

These sites did not have Internet connectivity, and the utility's network infrastructure wasn't geared toward handling real-time video streams. Furthermore, the utility lacked the in-house expertise to install network-based camera systems.

The utility reached out to GDS for help.

Solution

Securing Critical Infrastructure

First, GDS upgraded the utility's network core to support video, and moved the infrastructure into its data center so there was no single point of failure. GDS then deployed high-speed, fiber-based circuits to the well sites, enabling the implementation of network-based security cameras and access control systems. The utility was able to monitor the well sites 24x7 and have a log of technician access to the sites.

The high-speed network provided the capacity to support IP phones for communication with personnel working onsite. The utility also leveraged the circuits for the SCADA system that monitors and controls certain aspects of the well sites and collects telemetry data.

Improving Communications

The utility then asked GDS for assistance implementing security measures and an IP-based phone system in its corporate location. GDS provided the SIP trunks and the engineering expertise to install and configure the phone system. **This allowed the utility to save money by simplifying moves, adds, changes and other administrative tasks.**

GDS also helped the utility revolutionize its call center by leveraging the IP phone system. The call center is one of the most important aspects of the utility's operations, and it now serves as a central intake for customer support. The IP phone system also provides the flexibility to have staff work anywhere. This was particularly important during the pandemic as people began working from home. Call center managers can view statistics to understand what agents are doing. They can also provide coaching or barge into a call to help the agent, even if they're not in the same location.

Enhancing Security & Connectivity

The GDS data center infrastructure allows for remote access via virtual private networks (VPNs). GDS deployed a Cisco firewall in the data center to enable remote connectivity to certain resources. The firewall also provides advanced security controls, including malware protection, intrusion prevention and content filtering, which is key to keeping users secure.

Wireless connectivity is also important to the utility, as many employees need to work using mobile devices while walking around the facilities. GDS provides Cisco Meraki wireless access points to ensure seamless and secure connectivity.

Results

Working with GDS Ensures Results, Security and Reliability.

Integral to the solution are GDS's managed services, where we maintain round-the-clock vigilance, monitoring circuits, phone systems, firewalls, and all critical infrastructure components, ensuring uninterrupted performance.

Seamless Recovery & Ongoing 24x7x365 Support

The GDS team informs the utility immediately if there's a disruption, and expedites restoration of services. GDS has strong relationships with carriers, ensuring priority support in the event of an outage. The utility uses GDS data center services for virtual machines, virtual storage, co-location and more. GDS also keeps the utility's licensing and support agreements up to date.

Strategic Partnership and Trusted Expertise

The utility also appreciates GDS's engineering expertise. When the utility's IT team has tough technical challenges, they know they can call on GDS for help. GDS also has strategic

meetings with them regularly to assist with important technology decisions. Of particular importance is GDS's assistance with developing and implementing a security strategy to protect the utility's infrastructure. A relationship that began after 9/11 evolved into a 20-year partnership covering almost every aspect of the IT environment.

20 Years of Dependability: The Power of Long-Term Collaboration with GDS

The utility relies on GDS to help protect its critical infrastructure and enable communication. The GDS team also serves as a trusted resource for sound advice and technical expertise.