

Case Study: AT&T

AT&T operates a very large field-service organization to support its residential and business customers. Any improvements in productivity in this organization have a bottom-line impact. To assist in improving productivity, AT&T chose to work with NetMotion Wireless to deliver the Mobility XE™ solution. Results achieved to-date include an increase in productivity, a better customer experience, reduced expenses, and reduced overtime.

The Need for a True Mobile VPN

Like most companies, AT&T uses a standard VPN product that was not designed for mobile environments. During the course of a given work day, a technician could lose connectivity with the wireless network several times causing the VPN to drop its connection. This led to three significant issues. First, the root cause of the connection problem wasn't always apparent which triggered many help desk calls that would impact productivity and drive up costs. Second, because AT&T uses token generators for authentication, technicians had to log-in repeatedly, find their token, and re-enter the PIN. They then would need to re-launch their applications, log back in, and try to pick up where they left off. Third, the lack of reliable VPN connectivity impacted the systems-management process, leaving devices behind on required security patches, new drivers, and application updates.

About the Solution

AT&T conducted a pilot using Mobility XE Mobile VPN and, based on the results, decided to roll the application out to over 39,000 field technicians across the country. To support its customer base, AT&T invested in one of the largest fleet M2M field-service deployments.

Technicians drive to customer sites to perform service calls, new installations, and service upgrades. Now they are equipped with a Panasonic Toughbook which has been configured for cellular data and Wi-Fi access over the AT&T network either through an embedded Novatel or Qualcomm modem. The wireless connectivity gives the technicians access to email, general Web browsing and an internally developed app that handles dispatch, work orders, job tickets, parts and inventory management, and customer account information.

Organization



Industry

Telecommunications

Objectives

- Reduce help desk calls
- Eliminate dropped connections and need to re-authenticate
- Streamline updates and patches

Solution

- Mobility XE Mobile VPN
- Panasonic Toughbooks
- AT&T data network
- Internally developed field-service application
- Microsoft Systems Management Server

Results

- 1.8x increase in jobs-per-day
- 43% reduction in expenses
- 54% decrease in overtime
- Fewer support calls
- Simplified user experience with RSA SecurID
- Streamlined systems management

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The Mobility XE mobile VPN from NetMotion Wireless allows the technicians to maintain connectivity. Field technicians log-in once a day through a secure connection as they move in and out of wireless coverage areas and roam between networks without losing connectivity. The result is a streamlined user experience, improved field productivity, and enhanced support for customers.

Scalability to a Nationwide Field Force

With 39,000+ field-service technicians, the ability to scale to meet the demands of a large, expanding mobile workforce is paramount. Uptime is also very important to AT&T because a technician who is unable to connect to the network has lost work hours as well as revenue.

To keep its deployment running smoothly, AT&T uses the scalable and fully redundant capability of multiple Mobility XE server pools located at strategic data centers. Each pool consists of load-balancing mobility and backup servers, mobility warehouses that store user configurations, standby warehouses, and reporting servers that aggregate data for the Mobility XE Analytics Module.

While the automated load-balancing and failover automatically maintains overall performance without intervention, AT&T also uses the notifications capability in the Analytics Module to proactively monitor the deployment. It provides alerts of any potential problems, such as a CPU that might be approaching a utilization threshold.

Measurably Improved Results

The effectiveness of using NetMotion is easy to see. For the field technicians, reducing the number of log-ins to only once per day by maintaining connectivity has simplified their experience with SecurID tokens, resulting in fewer support calls.

Consistent connectivity also helps ensure that security patches, new drivers, and application updates are received without delay, streamlining systems management. For AT&T, the results are noticeable too, with a **1.8 times increase in jobs performed per day, a 54% decreased in overtime and a 43% reduction in expenses** – welcome improvements to productivity and the bottom line.

“We have a lot of field workers and they were losing a lot of time, having to re-establish connections multiple times a day.”

- Dave Thompson
Senior Technical
Architect

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