

Charter Business® Case Study: Riverside County Library Systems

CASE STUDY

For California's Riverside County Library Systems, serving a growing population in the digital age required it to rewrite the book on its wide area network.

The library system, which serves 2 million residents in a 7,000-square-mile county, was having trouble keeping up with growing demand for computer access. In the past few years, the number of Internet-connected computers at its 33 branch libraries had risen from 80 to 1,100.



"I'm very pleased. It was not a mistake to choose Charter Business. You will not be disappointed."

LUTHER BRADY

automation manager
Riverside County Library Systems

The resulting boom in data traffic was too much for Riverside County Library Systems' aging network, which relied on Frame Relay circuits purchased from two local telecoms. Not only was the network slow, but working with the two telecoms proved difficult, particularly when there were connection problems, said Luther Brady, automation manager for the Riverside County Library System.

"We had experience after experience after experience that led us to believe that [the telecoms] didn't know how to talk to each other, let alone us," he said. Still, with no real alternatives in sight, "we were willing to accept the poor service."

Making the fiber switch

After about two years of increasing bandwidth problems and network headaches, Riverside County Library Systems decided to make the switch to fiber-optic service by taking advantage of the federal E-Rate Schools and Libraries program. An arm of the Universal Services Fund, the E-rate program offers school and library districts discounted pricing on telecom and Internet-access services.

Originally, the library system was working with its two Frame Relay telecom vendors to make the fiber upgrades to the branch locations. But the telecom vendors could not supply fiber to eight of the branches, leaving the library system to look for alternatives.

Then one day, a Charter Business account representative called, asking for the time to make a presentation about the company’s fiber-optic business services.

“I frankly was a little bit skeptical, but he made a presentation that basically indicated we needed to check it out,” Brady said. He toured the Charter Business local interconnection facility and spent some time checking references, and he liked what he saw. Riverside County Library Systems then inked a contract with Charter Business to build the eight optical connections its other telecom providers couldn’t reach.

Charter’s quick response

Charter Business got to work almost immediately building out the fiber lines, even as the library systems’ two telecom vendors delayed, waiting for final confirmation that the project had been approved under the E-Rate program. The fact that Charter Business was willing to go ahead with the construction rather than wait for the final approval – which was all but guaranteed – was a big plus.

“Charter was willing to work with us on that, and the other two wouldn’t even begin installation until it was signed and sealed with the Schools and Libraries program – and it took them a year and a half,” Brady said.

There also was a stark contrast between how Charter and the two telecoms managed the fiber-line construction. While the two telecoms frequently missed scheduled installation appointments or showed up unannounced, Charter Business was on time and performed the work as promised.

“We knew in advance that they were coming; they were on time, and if there was any change we were notified as far in advance as possible,” Brady said. “The difference between the work scheduling, the commitment, the attention that could be paid to us – Charter Business has no peer.”



“It is a night-and-day experience working with Charter Business, Somebody answers the phone, and unless it requires an on-site visit, we have a resolution within minutes.”

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That attention to service has continued now that the eight branches are up and running on Charter Business fiber. The connection is rock solid and clean, and the customer service is equally reliable.

Night-and-day comparison

After the first year, Charter’s contract was expanded to include supplying the library system with Business Fiber Ethernet service, at data rates to the branch libraries that ranged from 10Mbps to 100Mbps.

“It is a night-and-day experience working with Charter Business,” Brady said. “Somebody answers the phone, and unless it requires an on-site visit, we have a resolution within minutes.”

The experience has been positive enough that Brady is now eyeing the expiration dates for the two other telecom contracts.

“When those contracts are up, Charter Business has a good shot at replacing them,” he said.

Going forward, the Riverside County Library Systems plans to apply for E-rate program approval to upgrade its phone system to a unified digital voice system – and when it does, it will be giving Charter Business a call, Brady said.

All in all, there is just one issue Brady has with Charter Business.

“The only disappointment I have with Charter Business is it doesn’t serve every library in [Riverside] county,” he said.

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