

Pipe company installs solid internet that can take the heat

Business needs

Access to consistent internet connections across 25 locations

Networking solution

AT&T Dedicated Internet and AT&T Business Fiber® deliver the dependable connectivity that ACT Pipe & Supply needs

Business value

Reliability and security

Industry focus

Fire protection, fabrication, and waterworks

Size

25 locations

About ACT Pipe & Supply

ACT Pipe & Supply, Inc. is the largest independently owned waterworks and fire protection distributor in Texas. The ACT team strives to be responsive, customer-focused, and knowledgeable. The company is headquartered in North Houston and maintains 24 branches across Texas to better serve its clients.

The situation

As the company grew, its locations added a myriad of different internet providers and siloed software applications reduced productivity. ACT Pipe & Supply required streamlined operations, reliable and secure connectivity, and applications that delivered value across all its locations.

Solution

Highly dependable AT&T Dedicated Internet offers a secure, consistent high-speed connection essential for critical business functions. AT&T Business Fiber® provides high-speed internet over a shared fiber optic network with built-in security.



Technology as a pipeline for growth

ACT Pipe & Supply, Inc. was initially founded in 1976 as a fire protection and fabrication business. It provided comprehensive fire protection systems to companies worldwide. Eight years later, it expanded into the waterworks industry. It now has 13 fully stocked waterworks branches throughout Texas.

IT Director Scott McDonald attributes the company's steady growth to its wise investment in technology. "Our ownership is very aware of the role of technology in modern business. If I recommend something and explain the value it will provide, it's likely to be approved," he said.

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**Scott McDonald, IT Director
ACT Pipe & Supply, Inc.**

When McDonald joined ACT Pipe & Supply 7 years ago, he saw an immediate need to simplify the infrastructure. "We had upwards of 20 internet providers and different kinds of software that weren't talking to each other. They were all siloed," he said.

The result was reduced collaboration and productivity, and connectivity was sometimes unreliable. "If the internet's down, people can't work because they won't have access to our file servers and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform. It's that simple," he said. "If there's a major network issue, then the company's pretty much unable to function in a normal manner. The two things that we absolutely must have are reliability and a vendor team that I can count on. I get both of those with AT&T Business, and the internet circuits are rock solid and reliable."

Consistent performance

McDonald chose AT&T Business for ACT Pipe & Supply based on its large and reliable network, fast 5G speeds,¹ and robust security features. "I've been using AT&T since I got my first T1 (transmission line) back in the early nineties; I liked its availability and reliability," he said. "Over the course of 18 to 20 years at my last company, our network was never down. So, when I came here, the first thing I did was take advantage of ACT's relationship with AT&T."

McDonald decided on AT&T Dedicated Internet and AT&T Business Fiber business-grade internet services. AT&T Dedicated Internet delivers a private connection with guaranteed symmetrical upload and download speeds. This is crucial for businesses like ACT Pipe & Supply that rely on consistent performance for high-bandwidth applications such as video conferencing, large file transfers, and multiple simultaneous broadcasts.

The company also uses AT&T Business Fiber, a high-speed fiber optic internet service that delivers fast upload and

¹ Req's compatible plan & device. Coverage not available everywhere. Learn more at att.com/5Gforyou.

download speeds, along with reliable connectivity and built-in 5G internet backup, to help ensure continuous operation. The service provides secure, reliable bandwidth to support advanced business technologies and applications with no speed or data caps and access to 24/7 support teams.

“AT&T Business was remarkably helpful in planning and executing our network, absolutely fixing any issues we ran into very quickly. Our AT&T Business rep also suggested solutions that I didn’t know existed,” he said. “What we’ve ended up with after 7 years is a very steady and predictable infrastructure, and that’s what we like. We have a very stable and functional SD-WAN, pretty much built on AT&T connectivity.”

Rock-solid reliability

ACT Pipe & Supply relies heavily on AT&T Dedicated Internet service. “It is our main internet connection for all our business, and we have a SD-WAN that encompasses all our branches, and the dedicated internet access points at the branches are connected directly to our firewalls. I can access a printer, a computer, a firewall, a switch, whatever, all the way in the Rio Grande Valley (in the southernmost tip of Texas) as if it were sitting right next to me.”

The company’s hybrid cloud platform and ERP servers are primarily connected by AT&T, he said. Every branch has at least one AT&T circuit. “Those AT&T circuits are responsible for making this business operate. It’s that simple. If the internet’s down, people can’t work because they won’t have access to our file servers. If there’s a major network issue, then the company’s pretty much flying blind.”

Security and peace of mind

McDonald counts on the security of AT&T Business solutions. “Obviously, security must be paramount to any business nowadays. With AT&T Business, we know that there probably won’t be a systemic disaster. Size matters. If a small player gets hit with a security breach, then it’s probably a dead-in-the-water disaster.”

“AT&T Business has an army of people monitoring everything, and another army of people developing the next generation of security software protocols.



“We have a very stable and functional SD-WAN, pretty much built on all AT&T connectivity.”

Scott McDonald, IT Director
ACT Pipe & Supply, Inc.

AT&T Business is a known quantity. We are aware of the resources they have. Everything is well-monitored, explained, and handled by the people at AT&T Business.”

He also appreciates the peace of mind that AT&T Business provides. “I get a proactive email from AT&T Business faster than I get a proactive email from my firewall. Friends of mine have had something bad happen on a Friday night and they didn’t know about it until Monday morning, when they walked in and everyone was standing around wondering when they’d be able to get to work.”

Thanks to AT&T Business, McDonald said, “I don’t have to constantly be in the office when I’m supposed to be at home on the weekend. That’s important to me. The tools and procedures that AT&T Business uses to ensure we’re aware of what’s going on are the gold standard.”

Building trust

McDonald likes to build trust with the company's vendors. "A lot of decision-making centers on relationships and the support I get. After doing this for over 40 years, I've learned a few things and don't need help often. But when I do, I really need it, and it's usually time sensitive. I've built my career on good experiences with AT&T Business," he said. "That's why when I took an overview of the infrastructure when I came here, and I realized it had to be fixed, I went in that direction. There is absolutely no way we would be where we are today if it weren't for the attention of our AT&T Business rep and the things that he's done for us."

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One time, the company needed fax lines for certain communications. That created a problem because fax lines are incompatible with the digital circuits that most companies use today. "I didn't know what we were going to do because we've tried different solutions and had some bad experiences," he said. His rep recommended AT&T Business Fiber, which converts traditional analog fax signals into digital signals. "It works wonderfully. The faxes work as if it were 1995," he quipped.

AT&T Business Fiber also enabled ACT Pipe & Supply to install a phone line in its elevators, allowing the company to obtain an elevator license. "We couldn't get a license without a phone line. We ran a phone cable from a TA (terminal adapter) box, which enabled us to get our elevator license."

How does this work? Fiber optic cables transmit voice data as light. An Optical Network Terminal (ONT) device or adapter converts the light signals back into electrical signals for use by phones.

Customer care

McDonald values the relationship he has with his AT&T Business account rep. "Instead of always trying to sell me the most expensive thing, he points to things that will do what we need them to do. It's hard to find that kind of support because most other vendors are always trying to sell me," he said. "The working relationship I have with AT&T Business is the reason that I stick with them."

In addition, he said, "The pricing I get from AT&T Business is outstanding. I am extremely pleased with the cost of everything we've done. The prices are very good and they're stable. Pricing isn't the first thing I look at, but I'm very happy to report that even if it was the first thing that I looked at, I would be with AT&T."

The AT&T Business customer care McDonald receives is reassuring too. "All I have to do is send an email to our account rep or give him a call, and then I'm not alone in the world. It's a big deal to me to have people I can count on."