AT&T Business

Bobcat of St. Louis uses AT&T Office@Hand to make it **easy** for customers to acquire its tough equipment

- **Business needs** - A focus on customer service led Bobcat of St. Louis to seek a more reliable network to link its locations, as well as better, faster ways for customers to get assistance.

- **Networking solution** - AT&T Office@Hand connects customers with Bobcat of St. Louis in virtually any way they choose, from voice calls to fax to text messaging and audio and video conferencing.

- **Business value** - The solution lets customers easily reach the best person to help them, reducing downtime at their job site, farm, or home, and helps Bobcat of St. Louis workers to be more responsive and productive.

- **Industry focus** - Compact construction equipment

- **Size** - 11 locations in the Midwest

About Bobcat of St. Louis

Bobcat of St. Louis is the premier dealer of compact construction and related equipment in the Midwest. Recognized as a growth company, it strives to provide world-class service to its customers, with a goal of being number one in the markets it serves. Bobcat of St. Louis was established in 1990, with one location and 11 employees. Over the past three decades the company has gradually expanded and today boasts 11 locations with more than 200 employees.

The situation

The team at Bobcat of St. Louis does whatever it takes to make it easy for its customers to buy and maintain compact construction equipment. "The toughest equipment brand is now the easiest to buy," the company website announces. As Bobcat of St. Louis expanded to 5 states, the company wanted to make it easier for customers to reach the right person—whether they wanted to buy or rent a Bobcat or other equipment, get replacement parts, or summon a service technician.

Building customer loyalty leads to steady growth

Bobcat Company refers to itself as "one tough animal." That may be true for the equipment it sells, rents, and services, but the Bobcat team are teddy bears when dealing with and responding to customers' needs. Their staff take extreme pride in helping to make customers' projects and goals easier. Sales and rentals are an important part of the company's business, and providing outstanding customer service helps to ensure long, reliable equipment performance and unwavering customer loyalty.

This emphasis on service has led to impressive growth. The company now has operations in 5 states, built on the values and attitudes of the family that started the company.

Bobcat of St. Louis employs more than 200 people; it boasts a staff of 50 technicians throughout its 11 branches and has 20 service trucks on the road every day. While its focus is on the Bobcat and Doosan brands, each of its locations is set up to service all equipment makes and models.

A staff almost always on the move

Drew Kamp, IT Technician for all Bobcat of St. Louis locations, said cultivating relationships is key to the company's success. "We try to be really personal with our customers," he said. "A lot of them come in on a weekly basis for parts or rentals, so our employees get to know them pretty well."

Because many customers enjoy coming into the stores, most customer service takes place there. However, logistics require that a significant number of interactions take place at customers' work sites, farms, or homes. "Our salesmen, for instance, are almost always out," Kamp said. "They don't even have desks in the stores."

More than four dozen technicians who make repairs to customers' equipment are also in the field a great deal, as are the 30 employees who provide road service to customers. To ensure that staff can help customers in need as soon as possible, Bobcat of St. Louis was looking for a more efficient way to communicate with its employees, both in the field and at store locations.

Faster and easier ways to connect

Bobcat of St. Louis also needed a more reliable network to link its 11 locations. "Our old phone system used a physical server at our main location in Valley Park, Missouri. We used MPLS lines to connect the rest of the stores," Kamp said.

The system wasn't as dependable as the company would have liked. "Whenever we opened a new location, we never knew if we were going to have a reliable broadband connection there," he said. "And if

our office at Valley Park would ever lose connection, the rest of the stores would lose their phones, too."

If a customer called the company's main number, dispatchers often didn't know where the employees were. Customers who dialed a direct-line number had to leave a voice message if the employee they were trying to reach was away from the office. The company needed a phone system that would make it easier for customers to reach their salesperson, repair technician, or road service assistance crew as fast as possible.

In addition, Kamp said, "The added features of being able to transfer calls to cellphones or use the software on computers to text would really help us a lot."

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Improved reliability and responsiveness

Bobcat of St. Louis already used some AT&T services, including Dedicated Internet Service, Fleet Complete for vehicle tracking, email filtering, and some wireless services, so Kamp looked at AT&T when he wanted to improve the company's communication flow. "Because we were an AT&T customer it made it easier," he said.

His account team suggested AT&T Office@Hand to help make Bobcat's workers more productive and more responsive to customers. Office@Hand is a cloud-based solution that provides voice, fax, text messaging, along with audio and video conferencing capabilities.

"The system's more reliable and it's a better solution in terms of making certain that our customers can reach the right person to help them," he said. Callers can continue to call the company's main number, but now each phone also has a direct-dial number. "Customers don't have to wait on hold to be transferred," he said. "They can just call directly."

Staff like that they now have different ways of communicating with customers. "Instead of a call just ringing at our desks, it can transfer directly to our cellphones or ring both at the same time," Kamp said. Staff no longer have to stop several times a day to check voice messages and return customer calls. "Now we can actually help them immediately instead of having to respond to them later."

Texting has become a popular option. "Our parts people use texting for customers trying to find a

specific part," Kamp said. "Now, the customer can send us a picture of the part so we know exactly what they are talking about, even if they don't. It's made a huge difference in parts."

Simplified dispatch and administration

Office@Hand also makes it easier for receptionists and dispatchers to reach staff in the office, at a customer location or on the road. "We really like the system. The receptionists can see the layout of the hub on their screens, so they can transfer calls more easily," he said.

"I wasn't a specialist with our former system, so I sometimes had to contract with an outside company to do some of the things that I couldn't," Kamp said. "Now I can just do it all myself."

He also appreciates the thoughtfully designed administrative portal. "It's just nice and simply laid out, which makes things really easy. I can easily add a new user

and order a phone right there if we don't already have one," he said. "I can also change the information and reset passwords or PINs for people who forget them."

And while the system is more reliable, if a Midwest storm or flooding knocks out service at one location, Bobcat of St. Louis now has the tools to make sure customers can still get through. "The AT&T portal makes it really easy; if one location is under water or without power temporarily, we can transfer its calls to other places."

Because Kamp's responsibilities include managing the phone system and computers for a staff of 200 in 11 different locations, this operational ease is important. "It's very user friendly. And it's fast. That's important because it saves us time."

Kamp said the relationship with AT&T has helped him stay on top of his many responsibilities at Bobcat of St. Louis. "The relationship with AT&T has been good," he said. "They try to make everything as easy as possible and get it done as quick as they can for us."

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