

# AT&T Business technology fuels a convenience store chain



- **Business needs** - The ability to process and secure credit card transactions, provide customer Wi-Fi, and arrange reliable phone services for a growing convenience store chain.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T Business Fiber and AT&T Phone for Business – Advanced deliver fast, reliable connectivity and voice service, AT&T DNS Security Advanced helps protect The Station against cyberthreats, and AT&T Managed Internet Backup enables business continuity.
- **Business value** - Customer satisfaction, the convenience of dealing with a single vendor.
- **Industry focus** - Convenience stores.
- **Size** - 50,000 monthly customers at each location.

## About The Station

The Station is a Kansas City area convenience store chain that offers fuel, a wide selection of merchandise, a deli, pizza shop, and a full liquor store. Customers can pay at the pump 24 hours a day and shop in the store from 6 a.m. until late at night. The Station also delivers to customers within 3-5 miles of its stores.

## The situation

The first Station was built in a rural area with a growing population. The owner needed to provision his store with internet connectivity, security, and phone service to support credit card transactions, ordering, and other business functions.

## Solution

AT&T Business delivered the communications infrastructure The Station needed to succeed. AT&T Business Fiber supplies consistently fast internet service, even at peak times. AT&T DNS Security Advanced proactively identifies dangerous domains and automatically blocks suspicious requests, and AT&T Managed Internet Backup supports business continuity. AT&T Phone for Business – Advanced provides the reliable voice service the busy Station properties require.

**“AT&T has never let me down. We have not had any issues.”**

**Alan Hoambrecker**  
Owner and CEO, The Station

## Building a better gas station

The Station is a bustling convenience store chain that’s wildly popular with its customers. Each of The Station’s three Missouri locations serves 50,000 customers monthly. Owner and CEO Alan Hoambrecker designed the stores to make it easy for customers to shop.

With three decades of experience in the retail industry, Hoambrecker understands what customers want. “After visiting so many other stores I saw things that I

thought were genius, and others that made me wonder what they were thinking. I always felt I could build a better store,” he said.

When his family moved to a new Missouri subdivision 30 years ago, there were no grocery or convenience stores anywhere nearby. “There was really nothing in our area, and I thought I could build a better store.”

## Safety and comfort

Hoambrecker was proved right when he opened his first Station location in 2010. Customers flocked to the large, bright convenience store that was stocked with more than 5,000 different household essentials. His Station included a pizza shop, deli, and a full liquor store.

The Station has 12-foot-high ceilings and large windows. “We don’t put any signs in the windows,” he said. “It’s a safety factor. A lot of store windows are covered with signs, and you can’t see what you’re walking into.”

Being able to see the store’s interior makes his customers comfortable. “Half of our market is women, and I want them to feel safe. You can see clear to the back of our stores, and you can see everybody that’s inside,” he said.

Most people who go to a gas station just pump their gas and go. But 75 percent of Hoambrecker’s customers go into The Station’s store for food, beverages, and household items. “Our stores are almost a destination. People plan to come inside because of our variety, the cleanliness, and the friendliness of our staff.”

## Giving people what they want

Hoambrecker also increased the number of coolers in his store to give customers the widest possible variety of beverages. “It’s kind of a joke in the convenience store world – I’ve never met a guy who had too many cooler doors,” he said.

While most convenience stores have six or seven cooler doors for beverages, The Station has 22 cooler doors and five freezer doors, offering customers an extensive line of energy and sports drinks, soda, and water. “And that doesn’t even count the beer,” he said. Each location also includes a 600-foot walk-in beer cooler that Hoambrecker describes as “bigger than a New York apartment.” He sells domestic and imported beers, local brews, craft beers, and seltzers from single cans to 24-packs.

He also stocks wine in bottles and boxes and a wide variety of liquor. “We give people what they want. I think they want variety, and nobody has more variety than we do.”

The Station further satisfies its customers by offering delivery services for all products. “I always thought delivery would be a great way to go, and another thing that makes us unique is that we actually deliver alcohol, too,” he said. “Our delivery employee has to be over 21 and has to check IDs to make sure the customer is over 21. We started doing this eight or 10 years ago and it’s been a big hit.”

Five years after building his first store, Hoambrecker opened a second Station location, and he added a third two years later. He is currently finishing his fourth location and plans to add one more.

## Building staff and customer loyalty

Hoambrecker’s commitment to his staff and customers has engendered loyalty from both groups. “I have a firm belief that we should really live our life by the golden rule. I think you get what you give, so if you treat people right, they will come back,” he said. “They have other options, so we have to give them a reason to come here.”

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**Alan Hoambrecker**  
Owner and CEO, The Station

He treats his employees well, arranging their work hours to accommodate their school schedules and other commitments. “I tell our employees, ‘I want your life to be better by working here and we’ll work around your schedule.’ I treat them with respect.” Hoambrecker says his staff work with him, not for him.

The approach is working. “Turnover is pretty high in the convenience store world, but we have good staff loyalty. We have six people who have been with us for more than 10 years, and three who have been here since we opened,” he said. “That’s the thing I’m proudest of. You get what you give, and you treat people right.”

He is grateful to the employers who mentored him in the past and tries to pass on the lessons he learned to his employees. “I’ve been blessed, and I feel that maybe I’m making a little bit of a difference and helping people along,” he said.

## The single biggest need

One of the challenges Hoambrecker faced was creating the infrastructure to support sales. “In our world, connectivity is probably the single biggest need. If you don’t have the internet, you can’t process credit cards; the ATM won’t work; you can’t do anything. Customers also expect you to have Wi-Fi. So first and foremost was probably the internet,” he said. “And we needed to make phone calls to place orders and take orders. Those two pieces are huge. If they go down, you might as well be closed.”

He began researching solution providers that could help. The remote location of his store was a stumbling block. “We wanted somebody that was reliable and large enough to connect all the stores,” he said. “I also wanted to have one contact person, to make it simple if I have a problem.”

Hoambrecker chose AT&T Business to deliver the internet and phone services his stores required. AT&T Business Fiber delivers the infrastructure to support Station locations now and into the future.

AT&T Business Fiber supplies all the connectivity to facilitate each location’s credit card transactions, enabling customers to purchase fuel even when the stores are closed. It supports the stores’ business, its ATMs and customer Wi-Fi, and facilitates ordering, billing, and other business functions.

## Security and peace of mind

The Station also relies on AT&T DNS Security Advanced to protect its locations against phishing, malware, ransomware, and unauthorized internet traffic. It protects each location’s internet, point-of-sale transactions, and credit card numbers. “AT&T has never let me down. We have not had any issues,” Hoambrecker said.

**“Our AT&T account rep has been a big help in making sure that we get everything set up the way that it should be.”**

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He also uses AT&T Managed Internet Backup, which restores The Stations’ internet connections if they are ever disrupted. The Managed Internet Backup solution includes up to 24 hours of battery backup to protect against any AC power outage at the store which may often occur during an outage, enabling their internet to always remain operational. “If you go down, you’re done. It throws everything out of kilter,” he said. “Having this AT&T backup is a huge deal. Nothing’s more embarrassing than when customers come in and you’d love to take their money, but you can’t.”

And AT&T Phone for Business – Advanced handles inbound and outbound calls with multiple calling features, enhancing the productivity of The Station staff.

## A single point of contact

A dedicated AT&T account representative supports all Station locations. "It's just been a really good thing all the way around," Hoambrecker said. "The biggest thing is that you have one source you can go to and get everything taken care of. Our AT&T Business account rep has been a big help in making sure that we get everything set up the way that it should be. All in all, everything's been a blessing."

He appreciates the convenience of a single point of contact. "We carry more than 5,000 products and you don't have a chance to be on top of every little thing, so it's really great when you have someone who can take care of one whole category for you."

The Station's AT&T Business account representative has helped Hoambrecker expand his business. "When you're trying to get set up, you just call, and she puts you in touch with the right people. It makes everything a lot easier," he said. "That's probably been the biggest thing. Our managers know who to call and how to proceed if they ever have an issue."

## "Professional and responsive"

Equipping all his locations has been a simple matter, Hoambrecker said; each deployment has been smooth. "It's actually been really easy," he said. "You feel secure knowing that somebody's got your back and they're taking care of what needs to be done." He describes the AT&T Business team as "professional and responsive," adding, "If you need something, you call AT&T and it's done. Their follow-up is excellent."

The dependability of the AT&T network is vital for Hoambrecker. "Reliability is huge, especially for anybody who takes credit cards. We don't have to worry about whether AT&T will be in business tomorrow."

Hoambrecker looks forward to constructing his fifth Station location, which he says will complete his company. He is proud that three of his children have worked with him over the years, and two are still working in the company. "You get what you give, and you just go out and do the best you can," he said.

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