



# World's Best Roof® manufacturer, Duro-Last, moves quickly to meet COVID-19 challenges with flexible AT&T networking solutions

- **Business needs** - The ability to shift production operations and enable certain staff to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T network, security, and mobility solutions gave staff the connectivity they needed to work from home while also supporting the company during production of a new line of personal protective equipment (PPE) for hospitals.
- **Business value** - Increased agility, business continuity
- **Industry focus** - Manufacturing
- **Size** - 6 U.S. locations

## About Duro-Last, Inc.

Duro-Last is the world's largest manufacturer of custom-fabricated, thermoplastic, single-ply roofing systems. The company devised factory-controlled custom fabrication processes that can eliminate up to 85% of field seams, resulting in lower on-site labor costs and materials that are easier to install. Duro-Last's roofing systems are sustainable and durable, and its product has become known as the "World's Best Roof®." More than two billion square feet of Duro-Last membrane have been installed throughout North America. Duro-Last is headquartered in Saginaw, Michigan, and operates additional manufacturing facilities in Oregon, Mississippi, Iowa, Texas, and Massachusetts.

## The situation

The COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges and opportunities for Duro-Last. In addition to finding ways to protect its employees against the virus, Duro-Last wanted to convert several of its manufacturing lines to begin producing personal protective equipment including isolation gowns, face masks, disinfecting wipes, and hand sanitizer for local hospitals.

## Solution

Already an AT&T customer, Duro-Last turned to AT&T for help in responding to the challenges posed by the pandemic. AT&T installed new circuits that amplified bandwidth, making it easier for some employees to work remotely and enabling the company to convert four production lines to produce sanitizers, hospital gowns, and masks.

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**Jeff Shrum**  
Director of Information Technology, Duro-Last, Inc.

## A commitment to quality

Duro-Last founder, John R. Burt, brought a lifetime of experience to the company he started in 1978. He served as a soldier and worked as a lumberjack, carpenter, and a tool and die maker before launching a swimming pool business. After a liner he had purchased failed, he recognized the importance of vertical integration to control quality, and he founded Tri-City Vinyl to manufacture his own pool liners.

John quickly saw that the product he created to keep water in could also be used to keep water out, and the Duro-Last Roofing System came to be. Duro-Last is now the world's largest manufacturer of custom-fabricated roofing systems. Its products, installation teams, customer service, and best-in-class warranties set the quality standards for the roofing industry, ensuring lasting watertight protection for commercial buildings.

Most commercial roofing systems are assembled on the rooftop, which can be a harsh environment under the blazing summer sun or the cold winds of winter. The Duro-Last Roofing System is designed to reduce rooftop labor for contractors with their custom fabrication process.

## Building roofs and relationships

Steve Ruth, Duro-Last's Senior Vice President of Sales Operations, said John pioneered the use of membranes to waterproof commercial buildings. “Now, 43 years later, the vast majority of buildings have single-ply membranes, but we were one of the first ones in when John invented this.”

John backed up a superior product with a commitment to customer service. He recognized the importance of developing strong relationships with his roofing contractor customers. “We are a big company now, but we have never lost that personal touch. We work hard at that,” Steve said. “Our contractors are our partners. They can always talk to a person when they call Duro-Last.” That's something you don't see much anymore but it's an approach that works. It makes Duro-Last special. It keeps our customers close to us and they really appreciate the relationship they have with us.”

An additional advantage is the company's dedication to quality. Andrea Fisher, Director of Marketing, said Duro-Last's Quality Assurance Technical Representatives are an important differentiator. “We have over 70 tech reps across the U.S. and Canada who personally inspect and audit all commercial installations to ensure the customer is getting the World's Best Roof,” she said.

“This skilled team offers exclusive training on the rooftop and in the classroom to our certified contractors to ensure the most efficient and state-of-the-art installation practices are utilized,” she said. “We have reps climbing ladders across the country, working with roofing contractors to make sure that the jobs are installed well and meet our rigorous standards.”

## Rapid response to help neighbors

Duro-Last works to be a good neighbor in the communities in which its plants are located. “Even though John Burt is no longer with us, his family still owns the company and some of those foundations that he started in the late 1970s are still core to the company,” Ruth said.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Michigan was hit very hard and PPE was in short supply. A small group of Duro-Last employees felt a need to help and used their expertise to begin fabricating and manufacturing medical gowns, masks, hand sanitizer, and industrial size sanitizing wipes.

The company converted four of its manufacturing lines to produce the items very quickly. “It was actually just 10 days from the first prototype until we were delivering masks and gowns to a leading, regional hospital system at the epicenter of Michigan’s crisis,” Fisher said.

The items were a blessing for the local hospital, and Duro-Last soon began getting requests for supplies from all over the country. Company officials shared Duro-Last’s designs and plans with other manufacturers in the hope of encouraging them to produce the supplies in their own communities.



## New demand for bandwidth

COVID-19 forced Duro-Last to quickly comply with government orders for all but essential workers to shelter in place. “When Michigan and a few other states where we have locations issued executive orders back in March, we had to get out of our buildings pretty quickly and get people working from home,” Ruth said.

This required Duro-Last Information Technology Manager Jeff Shrum and his team to create an infrastructure that would support a remote workforce. “Things happened very quickly. We went from approximately 40 people using the company Virtual Private Network (VPN) to a peak of 192 at one point,” he said.

“We knew we were going to need to increase bandwidth,” he said. Of special concern were the enormous computer-aided design (CAD) files that engineers needed to share with customers. “We knew our bandwidth would not be sufficient to support everybody.”

Duro-Last already relied on AT&T for an array of networking solutions, including AT&T Virtual Private Network service for its wide area network, AT&T Dedicated Internet, AT&T Business Mobility services, AT&T Business Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephony and a range of AT&T cybersecurity services. Shrum called on AT&T for help in upgrading the company's infrastructure to support dozens of remote workers.

“Every one of the AT&T products that I utilize is rock solid. That’s a testament to the AT&T team and their products.”

**Jeff Shrum**  
Director of Information Technology, Duro-Last, Inc.

## Flawless execution

“AT&T was really responsive and helped escalate us to the top of the list. They got everything done quickly,” Shrum said.

AT&T doubled the company's bandwidth to enable staff to work as efficiently from home as they had worked at the office. Providing access to the company Wide Area Network (WAN) was vital, since all Duro-Last plants are virtually paperless.

The upgrades took place on a workday, which initially worried Shrum. “We couldn't afford any downtime,” he said. “The cutover happened midday. AT&T executed with my team to get it done, and it was done quickly and flawlessly.”

Ruth was impressed by the seamless process. “Jeff and his team did some phenomenal stuff. Hundreds of people grabbed their equipment and left, and it all seemed to be flawless to me,” he said. “In fact, our customers didn't even know we were out of the building.”

## Working efficiently from home

The additional bandwidth enabled the engineers, sales reps, call center employees, and other staff to continue to work as usual during the pandemic. “We rely on the VPN to develop and promote sales and marketing material, as well as to meet daily, as a team, seeing each other at a time when we can't physically be together,” Fisher said.

Shrum said AT&T services were invaluable in supporting employees remotely. “Whether we're at one of our remote plants, whether they're working from home or in the office, AT&T makes it possible for staff to get their jobs done and continue doing what they need to do,” he said. “That's really what's important to us and it's something we stress in our relationship with the AT&T team.”

AT&T supports all Duro-Last plants, which are located in Michigan, Oregon, Texas, Mississippi, Iowa, and Massachusetts. “No matter where we put a plant, AT&T can service us,” Shrum said. “It's painful to get communication for plants in some remote locations, but AT&T does it for us and we have good communication nationwide.”

“AT&T services us coast to coast. We can turn to that single point of contact and say, ‘Hey, this is where we have a need,’ and AT&T can provide it,” he said.

## Virtually Seamless security

Thanks to Duro-Last's investments in network security solutions, Shrum has no worries about safely supporting remote workers.

Firewalls, threat detection applications, and other solutions enable the IT team to easily monitor all network traffic. The AT&T security solutions integrate virtually seamlessly with other AT&T network applications Duro-Last relies on, which greatly simplifies operations.

"Whenever I have a problem, I can look to one team. We put a ticket in one place. We don't have to remember which provider to call," Shrum said.

Swift resolution of any difficulty is further supported by the fact that Duro-Last uses AT&T cellular circuits for redundancy. "If we ever have a failure, it's two different technologies, so the plant will stay online," he said. "And the AT&T team does a remarkable job of jumping on any problems for us."

## Peace of mind

Shrum and his team appreciate the interoperability of their AT&T solutions. "We use a lot of services from AT&T and they integrate well. They're part of a cog in a big wheel that helps us with our communications," he said.

"It's important that we don't have to piece together one thing from one vendor and another thing from a different vendor," he said.

"When I have an issue, I know where to turn. That's what allows me to sleep at night. I don't have two different vendors pointing a finger at each other. How do you quantify that? It's peace of mind," he said.

He also values the high reliability of AT&T solutions. "There have been issues in the past with circuits being down a lot," Shrum said. "Since AT&T got our circuits into place, we have minimal down time internally with our servers and externally with AT&T circuits."

Duro-Last founder John R. Burt built his company on manufacturing quality products and backing them up with outstanding customer service. Duro-Last today expects the same commitment from the companies with which it does business.

"Every one of the AT&T products that I utilize is rock solid," Shrum said. "That's a testament to the AT&T team and their products. We pride ourselves on that for our people."

