



Sail Internet uses
AT&T Switched Ethernet on Demand
to bridge the digital divide in underserved neighborhoods

- **Business needs** - A way to supply high-speed internet service to neighborhoods with little or no access to traditional connectivity.
- **Networking solution** - With fixed wireless capabilities and backhaul using AT&T Switched Ethernet on Demand, Sail Internet fills the last-mile connectivity gap that prevents many people from accessing high-speed internet service.
- **Business value** - The innovative strategy delivers high-speed internet service to single-family homes, condos, and apartments—all at an affordable price.
- **Industry focus** - High-speed wireless and fiber internet service provider
- **Size** - Venture-funded startup

About Sail Internet

Sail Internet was founded to make high-speed internet accessible, affordable, and easy to use. The company delivers internet service where competitors don't go. Sail Internet delivers high-speed internet to businesses and homes in the San Francisco Bay area. They offer speeds that exceed the basic packages of most service providers at competitive prices.

The situation

Many people who live in densely populated suburban neighborhoods have little or no access to the fiber optic cable that delivers high-speed internet access. Sail Internet needed a way to close this gap. They wanted to provide fiber-quality, high-speed internet service to people in areas not served directly by fiber from the large internet providers.

Solution

Sail Internet uses cutting-edge wireless technology with Switched Ethernet on Demand from AT&T to help fill the last-mile connectivity gap. The breakthrough “on-demand” software-defined network solution from AT&T Business enables Sail to provide high-speed internet services to areas that were never before able to access them.

Bridging the gap where fiber ends

Most Americans take high-speed internet service for granted. However, 19 million Americans—6% of the U.S. population—still lack access to broadband.¹ Sail Internet was founded by technology entrepreneurs who believe everyone should have access to the highest speed internet service.

Sail Internet CEO Kevin Fisher is passionate about delivering the power of high-speed internet to people in underserved areas. His vision? Make new technology accessible, easy-to-use, and affordable on a mass scale. Toward that end, he has received more than 20 patents for his high-tech innovations.

“I realized that there are a lot of limitations with the copper cables, and fiber is the future,” Fisher said. “And at the same time, I saw improvements in low-power, fixed-wireless technology, mainly derived from Wi-Fi. This led to the company, and our goal is to bridge the gap between where the fiber ends and where people live and work using a new generation of wireless technology—fixed wireless.”

Delivering connectivity to underserved areas

Fiber optics changed the infrastructure of the internet but also left many consumers behind. Miles of fiber optic cable are just out of reach of the average home or business because of the “last-mile” infrastructure of the internet. Fiber technology often stops at the edge of population centers, leaving many without access to high-speed internet.

Fisher understood that internet service is mission-critical for most households. “People in these neighborhoods want good internet service just as much as suburban customers, but their previous options were quite poor,” he said.

He set out to change that. “Our challenge was how to use commodity low-cost wireless equipment, mainly based on unlicensed spectrum, and make it reliable so it works almost as well as fiber,” he said. Sail Internet looked for a way to use cutting-edge wired and wireless technology to bridge service from industrial fiber to consumers.

Extending the fiber experience

One of the ways Sail Internet does this is by using breakthrough Switched Ethernet on Demand service from AT&T Business. They use it as the high-speed fiber backbone to extend accessibility from the end of the fiber using fixed wireless technology. Switched Ethernet on Demand is a software-defined network solution that makes network management easy for Sail Internet.

¹ <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/eighth-broadband-progress-report>

“AT&T is a particularly good partner for us because they have lots of fiber,” Fisher said. “They have at least a million miles of fiber in the United States, and a lot of it is not being fully utilized. We make use of that fiber and extend the fiber experience to new places.”

Sail Internet connects clients to AT&T Business fiber by using line-of-sight, fixed-wireless technology that extends for a mile or two. “The catch is you need line of sight, so a pure wireless solution from a data center is not a viable option,” Fisher said. “To really proliferate this product and go to a lot of different locations, we have to make use of things like Switched Ethernet on Demand and high-density fiber deployment from AT&T Business.”

“The reach of the AT&T fiber network and the ease of doing business with partners like AT&T Business enabled us to scale our business faster. We can order a new connection via the web and AT&T enables the service in days.”

Kevin Fisher, Ph.D.
CEO, Sail Internet

Reliable, affordable performance

Thanks to solutions like AT&T Switched Ethernet on Demand, Sail Internet can deliver high-speed internet to homes and businesses that could never before access the service. The company creates a wireless distribution point with line of sight to its target locations. Switched Ethernet on Demand from AT&T connects the distribution point to the Sail Internet hub, where it’s connected to the internet. “We deliver great performance and reliable service at an affordable price, but it’s really our support and how we treat our customers that makes me most proud,” Fisher said.

“We’ve helped a lot of customers who formerly had problems with their internet service to live better lives by using our low-cost wireless technology,” he said.

Many of his first customers used Sail Internet to enable them to work from home. “Now, because of COVID, everybody’s doing it,” Fisher said. “But all along we were focused on supporting people who work from home because we have high upload speeds and our product works much better than cable for things like video conferencing.”

Javier Quezada, Sail Internet’s Head of Business Development, was a Sail Internet customer before he joined the company. “I could not believe what I was hearing when Sail became available in my neighborhood,” he said. “I looked at the speed and couldn’t believe you could accomplish that via a wireless distribution point. I fell in love with the product and the company.”

Before long he had joined the Sail Internet team and helped recruit thousands of new subscribers. “I’m proud that we’ve accomplished everything we set out to do,” he said. “There has not been any obstacle or technology problem that we have not surmounted.”

Elizabeth Pires is Sail’s Head of Marketing. “From my perspective,” she said, “it’s the people that make me proud. We have a very small team, but they are all exceptional at what they do, and we see everything we do through the customer lens. We want to provide that exceptional experience and differentiate from what they have been used to experiencing. And I like the fact that we are able to make a positive difference in helping to bridge that digital divide across the areas that we’re serving.”

A mission to bring internet access to everyone

Thanks to partners like AT&T Business, Sail is now extending high-speed internet service into communities that never before had it. “We find an area where there’s an unmet demand, where AT&T has fiber, and we can get access to a building,” Fisher said. For instance, Sail recently partnered with Gardner Family Health to provide high-speed internet to residents of a mobile home park in Alviso, California, where residents had few internet options.

Sail and Gardner came to an agreement for using Gardner’s rooftop as a location for Sail’s fixed wireless technology. As a result, people in the mobile home park and other Alviso residents who were previously unable to stream basic services now have access to fiber-caliber internet speeds up to 200Mbps.

Quezada said it’s ironic that many areas in the heart of the Silicon Valley have some of the worst internet options. “I spent two years of my life trying to get internet service to the Alviso property, and I’m personally grateful that I work for a company with a mission to bring internet access to everyone,” he said.

“We work with other partners, but none of them have the reach that AT&T has, and none of them have the account team that they have.”

Javier Quezada,
Head of Business Development, Sail Internet

Speed and scalability

Fisher sees several benefits in Sail’s relationship with AT&T Business. “AT&T has really helped us accelerate, so we can get to markets faster, quicker,” he said. “It’s really about scalability. The reach of the AT&T fiber network and the ease of doing business with partners like AT&T Business enabled us to scale our business faster. We can order a new connection via the web and AT&T enables the service in days.”

Quezada added, “AT&T Business allows us to get to market faster, and once we’re there, we don’t have any anxiety about how much fiber we can tap into. We work with other partners, but none of them have the reach that AT&T has, and none of them have the account team that they have. We are fortunate to be able to work with our AT&T Business account team.”

The company's AT&T account manager wears many hats. "He's my sales engineer and for our engineering team, he's the project manager, and for our CEO he's kind of a finance manager," Quezada said. "And it's great to have a partner like that. I can honestly say if we didn't have the account team that we have right now, we probably would not have had this kind of success with AT&T."

Fisher said his relationship with AT&T Business began when he was in high school and spent a day with engineers at AT&T. The experience helped him decide to study electrical engineering. "I went to University of Illinois, then Stanford, and I have a long history of working with AT&T as a customer, supplier, and partner," he said. Fisher and his team developed the core technology behind the award-winning line of portal devices deployed by AT&T/U-verse.

"So it's not just Switched Ethernet on Demand, but the people supporting it that make the difference for us," he said. "AT&T is a large complex company, but our account team made AT&T Business easy to work with. Speed really matters to us as a small startup."

Filling the gaps nationwide

Since COVID-19 hit the United States, Sail Internet has made it possible for many people to work and learn from home. "The pandemic has caused an unprecedented need for faster and more reliable internet at home, but yesterday's networks probably haven't been preparing for this," Quezada said. "Everyone needs to be connected to the rest of their world from their homes, so they need as much bandwidth as possible."

He's proud that Sail Internet is supplying bandwidth to many neighborhoods that previously couldn't get the service. "We've seen a surge in our signups every month," he said. "We are harnessing the power of fiber for people who have not been able to access it."

While the company began in California, it has big plans to extend its reach to the rest of the country. "It's our goal to become a nationwide provider of internet service," Pires said. "We'll fill the gaps wherever they are. If you have fiber, great, you should get it. But for the rest of us, Sail Internet is the answer."

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Elizabeth Pires
Head of Marketing, Sail Internet