



Empowering and employing the differently abled

- **Business needs** - Communications services to support training programs.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T Business connectivity and voice solutions give staff the tools they need to perform the institute's important work.
- **Business value** - The ability to encourage independence for people with differing abilities and provide a source of steady, well-trained workers for local businesses.
- **Industry focus** - Training and job placement for people with differing abilities
- **Size** - 2200+ individuals served last year

About the Bobby Dodd Institute

Bobby Dodd Institute (BDI) is a nonprofit dedicated to empowering people with differing abilities to maximize their potential via self-sufficiency and community inclusion. It offers a continuum of support for all ages, stages, and levels of need for people with disabilities and their families. The organization strives to be inclusive. By embracing people of differing abilities, it believes it can create a more inclusive community where each person's unique strengths are empowered and employed.

The situation

Like most nonprofits, the Bobby Dodd Institute works to operate as efficiently as possible, to enable it to serve more clients. The organization needed highly reliable, cost-effective voice and connectivity services to help train individuals to succeed in the workplace and assist them in securing jobs.

Solution

Bobby Dodd Institute chose several AT&T Business services, including the AT&T Dedicated Internet with AT&T Business Voice over IP bundle, to supply the connectivity and phone services the organization depends on. It also selected AT&T High-Speed Internet – Enterprise to back up its network, and AT&T Business Wi-Fi powered by Cisco Meraki access points to help connect, protect, manage, and scale its network.

Fostering independence and inclusion

The Bobby Dodd Institute (BDI) works to empower people with differing abilities. It seeks to maximize their potential by securing economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion within their communities. It offers programs and consulting services for individuals with disabilities and their loved ones, helping secure benefits and providing job placement services for the differently abled.

BDI offers a full lifecycle of support for people of all ages and levels of need. Its business services provide the economic engine that drives its mission forward, while simultaneously creating job opportunities for people of all abilities. Last year, BDI served 2,213 people. This includes placing close to 200 people into employment at one of its more than 40 worksites or with a community-based partner.

The organization carries on the legacy of former volunteer and passionate advocate Bobby Dodd, the Hall of Fame Georgia Tech coach and athletic director. Coach Dodd believed in helping others succeed by playing to their strengths. BDI shares this vision.

Honing job skills

LaTasha Johnson, BDI Operations Support Specialist, said she and her colleagues are proud to continue the work of Coach Dodd. “We work with people who are disabled, providing job training and employing them,” she said.

Some are referred by school systems as they prepare to transition to life beyond school. “Other times parents or caregivers reach out to us, and we’ll bring them in for an intake to see what works best,” Johnson said.

BDI works with clients who have many different levels of ability. “We employ people from all walks of life,” Johnson said. “Some have visual impairments, some use wheelchairs, some have learning disabilities. Our staff help clients identify and hone their skills so they can thrive in the workplace.”

Johnson continued: “We evaluate clients to see exactly where they are, what they can and want to do, and where we can place them so they’ll succeed,” she said. Some work in the BDI warehouse and call center, while others perform maintenance services. Ongoing evaluations measure their progress and make sure they’re happy doing their jobs. “If they are not happy, we’ll reevaluate and find something that works better for them,” she said. “We always stay on top of it.”

Celebrating client success

BDI employs about 100 clients who train and work at the institute with jobs in maintenance, call center operations, and other positions. After they receive training, some go to work for organizations such as federal agencies and national corporations that

contract with BDI to provide workers. Since its inception in 1989, BDI has successfully placed more than 6,000 people in the community.

Johnson and her colleagues celebrate the successes of all their clients. “The best part is seeing people with disabilities working in the community with everyone else,” she said. “As a disabled veteran myself, I love seeing them prosper. It is amazing to see people getting the training, love, and attention that they need and deserve. That is the part of this job that I just love.”

Most clients do very well in their jobs, some even rising to supervisory roles. Johnson is especially proud of one client who works at BDI. “He is completely blind and works in our warehouse. He actually has the top production of everyone in the warehouse. He lives by himself and gets back and forth to work. He’s just amazing,” she said.

BDI recognizes the accomplishments of all its clients, employer partners, and community advocates every March at its Breakfast with Champions event. Almost 300 BDI supporters gathered at last year’s event, which also raises funds to support the organization’s good work.

Streamlining and saving

As the organization grew, it became more difficult for the BDI staff to manage its communications services, especially since there were several vendors involved. “We had so many accounts that they kind of got away from us,” Johnson said. “We had telephone lines and internet services, some of which were managed by contractors. And we had gotten rid of some contracts but were still paying for the services.”

She reached out to her trusted AT&T Business account representative for help. “We’ve had AT&T for many years. We were blessed to have our AT&T Business account rep come and help us get a grip on our accounts.”



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LaTasha Johnson

Operations Support Specialist, The Bobby Dodd Institute

AT&T Business helped BDI eliminate unnecessary services, streamline operations, and save money with the AT&T Dedicated Internet and Voice bundle. AT&T Dedicated Internet simplifies network management by consolidating voice and data to optimize network capacity and control costs. BDI also uses AT&T High-Speed Internet with Gigabit Passive Optical Networking (HSI-GPON) for redundancy. Additionally, BDI uses AT&T Business Wi-Fi powered by Cisco Meraki access points.

The BDI staff appreciate the dependability of their internet and voice services. “If we’re not up and running then somebody’s not getting help,” Johnson said. “AT&T Business has been very reliable. The services are wonderful.”

The dependable connectivity also benefits BDI clients who are learning computer skills. “We just started a certification program called Bridge Academy to assist individuals in starting a career in the IT field,” Johnson said. “The training is designed to help the program’s participants secure above living-wage jobs in the thriving technology sector.”

Attentiveness and expertise

Johnson said she is pleased by the attentiveness and expertise of her AT&T Business account representative. “He makes it so much easier for me to make sure our clients have what they need,” she said. “If I have any questions, he is right there. And if he doesn’t have an answer right away, he gets me an answer.”

AT&T Business makes it a simple matter for BDI to deliver communications services to all its locations. “A lot of our places are outside Atlanta and I’m unable to get to them,” Johnson said. “AT&T Business communicates with the people at our other locations, making sure they have what they need.”

As BDI’s operations support specialist, Johnson is responsible for protecting the organization’s networks. “Security is crucial,” she said. “We have personal information, medical records, and other data that we protect. AT&T Business is definitely the best way to go.”

Johnson is quick to recommend AT&T Business because of the way it helps to safeguard the institute’s data. “It’s been a great experience,” she said. She expects the organization’s relationship with AT&T Business to continue in the future. “We’re definitely expanding a lot,” she said. “And we’re looking forward to having AT&T Business as a partner as we grow.”



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