

# Highly reliable connectivity on a 5G platform

saves contractor D.A. Dodd time and money

- **Business needs** - D.A. Dodd was looking for better mobile connectivity so their employees at remote job sites could reliably access information and communicate with vendors and supervisors.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T-powered mobile phones and tablets help keep workers connected and enable them to easily access technical documents and videos.
- **Business value** - Increased productivity, efficiency, and savings
- **Industry focus** - Mechanical, plumbing, and sheet metal contractor
- **Size** - 100-300 employees

## About D.A. Dodd

D.A. Dodd, LLC is a fully bonded, licensed, and insured union contractor. They operate in Northern Indiana and Southwest Michigan. The company handles plumbing, heating, cooling, and industrial-process piping jobs of all sizes. Its customers come from the commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors. They include hospitals, K-12 schools (private and public), colleges and universities, manufacturing facilities, financial institutions, and major corporations. D.A. Dodd is part of the Mno-Bmadsen family of companies, the non-gaming enterprise of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.

## The situation

As a mechanical, HVAC, plumbing, and sheet metal contractor, D.A. Dodd installs heating and cooling systems, refrigeration, piping, and plumbing. Mobile devices have become the best way for crews to access construction documents from apps or browser-based platforms. Connectivity was an ongoing problem, especially at jobsites in remote locations. It cost the company time and money when their journeymen had to drive to the closest town to download the necessary documents. D.A. Dodd needed to find a better way for employees at jobsites to stay connected.

## Solution

Mobile phones and tablets with AT&T connectivity enable workers to access the tools they need to do their jobs and remain in touch, even in remote areas. The new 5G-compatible devices provide workers greater access to fast, lower latency connectivity. Workers are better able to connect with supervisors when they have a question or need to download blueprints or other work-related documents, further enhancing their productivity.

## Expertise and a commitment to the region

D.A. Dodd has earned a reputation in Michigan and Indiana for the quality of its workmanship. It is equally skilled in new construction and in retrofitting into older technology for clients including universities, hospitals, casinos, and multi-national corporations. Clients benefit from the expertise and experience of D.A. Dodd's plumbers, pipefitters, refrigeration, food service, and HVAC technicians.

Matt Hintz, D.A. Dodd's Building Information Modeling and Virtual Design Construction Manager, said the company takes pride in its craftsmanship and customer service.

"We're known for doing quality work, standing behind it, catering to the needs of the customers, and being open, clear, and honest about it," Hintz said. "We really strive to build relationships with customers."

## Increased demand for digital data

Hintz started at D.A. Dodd as a plumber and member of the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union Local 172. His interest in technology, however, led to his learning to use computer-assisted programs to design mechanical and plumbing pipe systems. "I came up through the trade, but had a proclivity for technology and computer software," he said.

He also serves on D.A. Dodd's technology committee, leading the search for software solutions that can increase efficiency and help the company win more work. "The amazing software and services that we use all hinge on connectivity and access to data," Hintz said.

The demand for digital data increased significantly several years ago when the company decided to go paperless. Giving workers access to design documents and other information in the field required a reliable mobile platform with consistent connectivity to the internet.

"A lot of our software and services are browser-based platforms, which means if you can't connect, you can't see the information," he said. Giving workers the ability to access information in the field meant they would not have to track down project managers to get answers.

"We give them the tools to be able to answer questions on their own, so they can be more productive and have fewer headaches and challenges in order to ultimately install, fix, or resolve the client's issues," Hintz said.

## A constant flow of information

The company submits daily manpower reports to its construction management team. “There is a constant flow of information that goes back and forth between us and our vendors, clients, and subcontractors,” Hintz said. “I would say 99% of our communication flows through our mobile device platform.”

It had become evident that Dodd’s wireless provider was unable to supply the connectivity to support the flow of information they needed, especially on jobsites in remote locations. “And our representative wasn’t very responsive,” Hintz said. “We felt that they were taking our relationship for granted. It was clear that we weren’t a priority anymore.”

After considering available vendors and solutions, D.A. Dodd chose AT&T Business to supply the connectivity its teams require to serve their customers.

## Access to data empowers workers

Almost immediately, the solution from AT&T Business helped eliminate the downtime that teams formerly experienced when they could not get a connection. “Having access to data empowers trusted foremen, journeymen, and journey workers to find the information on their own because it is readily accessible,” he said. “That’s where AT&T comes in. AT&T Business provides data or great access to data, whether it be audio, text, internet, or voicemail.”

As an example, Hintz talked about access to installation instructions. “The crew might need to know how to

rough in a toilet for a specific project—they always have different requirements. Now a crew can have a submittal sheet from the manufacturer at their fingertips. They can just tap a few buttons and they’ve got all the information. Even if they’re underneath the sink, down in the mechanical room, or out in the middle of the field.”

Hintz added: “Being able to have the answer right then and there is incredibly powerful. It saves a tremendous amount of confusion and rework.”

## Troubleshooting and training

Working with connected mobile devices like tablets and phones also facilitates ordering. “A lot of our foremen like being able to send purchase requests right from the field,” Hintz said. “And the vendors that we work with provide notifications when material or parts and pieces are arriving onsite and confirm the drop-off location.”

In addition, employees can submit weekly timecards by using their phone or tablet. “This saves us a tremendous amount of time, because they don’t have to drive back to the main office or print out papers to scan in. It absolutely affects all facets of our business,” Hintz said.

D.A. Dodd also uses a videoconferencing program for troubleshooting and training. “That’s one of the advantages of having all these mobile devices,” Hintz said. “I can take a picture or a video or share a livestream of specific problems or issues. We also videoconference ‘Toolbox Talks,’ our job safety meetings.”

## A refreshing change in customer service

The company purchased 170 new 5G-capable devices, all with AT&T connectivity. “It was a decision we made as a company to go to a single platform for our smartphones and tablets, and we decided to go with AT&T Business,” Hintz said. “We felt that it was the best move forward, with 5G coming out. This sets us up for the next five to 10 years.”

Hintz shared how much he enjoyed his account team from AT&T Business. “They were patient and understanding,” he said. “They were here for us, always willing to meet and talk. D.A. Dodd is a company that hangs our hat on relationships, reliability, and standing behind our work. That’s something we look for in our vendors, and that’s what we found in our account team from AT&T Business. Ultimately, that made the decision easy for our executive team.”

The relationship is a welcome change from previous vendors. “If I hear recommendations that don’t prioritize the vendor’s bottom line, but instead focus first on our needs and making our success a priority, I start to feel trust in that vendor. I have faith that they really are trying to provide a better service. That was the big thing that AT&T Business brought to the table.”

## Quality resources for employees

Deploying the new devices to workers was a smooth process. “There was very little disruption in our operations,” Hintz said. Employees were pleased to be able to access data from the field, and managers were happy with the price.

The ability for staff to access information in the field also saves the company money. “They used to have to drive to a library or other public location where they could get connectivity,” Hintz said. “In our industry, having a journeyman onsite costs about \$1 a minute.”

Leaving the jobsite to find connectivity, download the necessary resources and driving back could cost the company \$60 to \$70 plus the cost of the vehicle and gas.

“With AT&T coverage, we were able to cut expenses by 25% while providing improved connectivity to our field users,” he said. “And that’s always a bonus. We want to be lean and efficient, but we want to provide quality resources for our employees. Being able to stay on the jobsite and have the answer right then and there using the platform from AT&T Business has been and will always be invaluable.”



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## Tools to maintain safety

Because of the reliability of the solutions from AT&T Business, D.A. Dodd is exploring the possibility of using its mobile platforms for emergency messaging to field personnel. “Everybody has email, but not everybody is in a position to check email all the time,” Hintz said. “We’d like to use our mobile devices for emergency messages and safety reminders from Human Resources. Safety very much affects our ability as a company to bid and win work. We have to have an excellent safety record. We see our mobile devices as integral tools in maintaining our safety record.”

Beyond the business process improvements and savings the solutions and connectivity from AT&T Business have generated, D.A. Dodd values the relationship it has built with AT&T. “We don’t specialize

in communications, but AT&T does,” Hintz said. “As a company, we believe in using people and companies with the expertise to help us work through issues and get resolutions.”

And the account team from AT&T Business has more than met Dodd’s expectations. “If our account rep didn’t have the answer, he would go get somebody that had it,” Hintz noted. “He has made a point to maintain the same level of communication after the sale. We’ve noticed and it’s highly appreciated. The account team told us they would take care of us and solve any problems, and they delivered on that.”