

Spurs Sports & Entertainment delivers the ultimate fan experience with AT&T Wi-Fi 6 and 5G

- **Business needs** - Innovating new ways for guests to experience entertainment.
- **Networking solution** - Advanced AT&T Wi-Fi 6 and the AT&T 5G environment enable new levels of engagement at games, concerts, and other events.
- **Business value** - Immersive experiences, enhanced guest satisfaction, and loyalty
- **Industry focus** - Sports & entertainment
- **Size** - Millions of guests per year

About Spurs Sports & Entertainment

Spurs Sports & Entertainment (SS&E) is the premier provider of sports and entertainment in South Texas. SS&E owns and operates the San Antonio Spurs of the NBA, the Austin Spurs of the NBA G League, and San Antonio FC of the United Soccer League Championship. SS&E also manages the day-to-day operations for 2 venues and a charity. They run the Frost Bank Center (one of the nation's leading entertainment venues), Toyota Field (one of the premier stadiums in the USL Championship), and Spurs Give (a 501c3 public charity).

The situation

Big-name stars and winning records are not enough to excite many fans these days. With ticket prices rising, audiences expect outsized entertainment. They also want to be able to connect in fun, meaningful ways with the team or the entertainer they have come to see. SS&E wanted to help give fans at the Frost Bank Center what they want.

Solution

SS&E chose AT&T Wi-Fi 6 connectivity to deliver higher levels of engagement than fans ever dreamed possible. Combined with the newly deployed AT&T 5G broadband infrastructure, this managed solution gives fans all the bandwidth they need to enjoy a super immersive experience. The solution also enables no-touch ticketing and refreshment purchases to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It has laid the foundation for exciting new capabilities.

Delivering a great fan experience

SS&E provides high quality sports and entertainment experience to its guests. It also works to make a positive impact on the community. In addition to owning the five-time national champion San Antonio Spurs, an NBA G League team and a professional soccer team, SS&E manages the operations of the Frost Bank Center, the premier entertainment venue in South Texas.

In the two decades since it opened, the arena has attracted more than 10 million guests to thousands of events. These include San Antonio Spurs games, the annual San Antonio Livestock Show and Rodeo, Cirque du Soleil, World Wrestling Entertainment, and concerts by Aerosmith, Bon Jovi, The Eagles, Lady Gaga, and hundreds more.

SS&E must give fans unique, entertaining, memorable experiences. Officials understand that people expect a lot when they attend a concert or sporting event. In 2015, the Frost Bank Center underwent a \$110 million renovation to enhance the guest experience at all levels of the arena.

“Spurs Sports & Entertainment is focused on providing our fans with the best experience that we can,” said Joe Loomis, SS&E Vice President of Finance and Technology. “We’re driven by our values of integrity, success, and caring. That means doing the right thing in everything we do. To us, good business is making our fans happy.”



“Utilizing AT&T 5G and Wi-Fi 6 lets us provide the best possible fan experience.”

Joe Loomis

Vice President of Finance and Technology
Spurs Sports & Entertainment

New ways to enjoy the show

Casey Heverling, Vice President and General Manager of the Frost Bank Center, sees the venue as “a town square where folks come together to enjoy live entertainment and create memories.”



“This is all about the fans and serving them the best we can.”

Casey Heverling, Vice President and General Manager, The Frost Bank Center

He has watched fan expectations change dramatically over the years. “It used to be that the game on the court or the acts on the stage were enough,” he said. “Now we realize, especially on the franchise side where we have an ongoing relationship with a fan coming to a number of games a year, the experience really starts even before they get to the building.” This understanding has caused SS&E and the Frost Bank Center to consider every aspect of the fans’ journey, from their driveways to their seats.

While the organization has systems and procedures in place to respond to guests, Heverling said they always strive to better anticipate fans’ needs. This is how the fan experience has evolved. “The biggest challenge for us is scale,” he said. “How do you anticipate the needs of 18,000 people?”

Loomis agrees that a decade ago the event itself was the draw to get people into the building. “But fans’ needs and priorities have changed,” he said. “There is a lot more competition for that entertainment dollar.”

Responding to changing expectations

Heverling and Loomis see technology as an important element of fan engagement. “As technology has evolved, it’s helped us enhance the fan experience in numerous ways,” Loomis said. For that reason, the Frost Bank Center has consistently made upgrades over the years. Several interactive technologies that SS&E has introduced quickly became fan favorites. They also put heavy pressure on the venue’s network.

“Everyone, especially millennials, enjoys taking pictures and videos and then sharing them on social media,” Loomis said. “And unfortunately, that was not the greatest of experiences in large parts of our building, so people would get frustrated,” he said.

SS&E wanted to turn that frustration into fun. “As fans’ needs and wants evolve, we want to interact with them to provide them the best possible experience,” Loomis said.

Superior performance

SS&E began its network makeover with next-generation AT&T Wi-Fi 6. It can scale and support SS&E apps for guests. The solution is tailor-made for venues like the Frost Bank Center. It greatly enhances performance in congested areas. How? The various technologies that create Wi-Fi 6 support increased spectrum efficiency, improving the network's capacity to handle large numbers of devices.

SS&E also upgraded the AT&T 5G environment, making the Frost Bank Center the first venue in the nation to combine AT&T 5G with powerful Wi-Fi 6. "Using AT&T 5G and Wi-Fi 6 lets us provide the best possible fan experience," Loomis said. "Whether that's enabling more interactive experiences or improving fans' ability to stream and upload videos to share on social media."

AT&T technology also supported SS&E efforts to simplify operations. "We started down this path before COVID to improve fans' experience with concessions, ticketing, and parking," Loomis said. "We needed the best technology, both from a Wi-Fi and cellular perspective."

"We're a championship-driven organization and we want to be associated with providers that have a similar best-in-class attitude and commitment."

Casey Heverling
Vice President and General Manager
The Frost Bank Center



Resources to support continuous improvement

SS&E's innovations in no-touch ticketing, parking, and concessions have served the organization well since the COVID-19 outbreak. "We have completely digital mobile tickets now," Heverling said. "We started that process well before COVID, but it's now becoming a requirement."

SS&E and the Frost Bank Center can now eliminate cash and make all transactions using a mobile device if need be. "The cashless use of mobile to order food and beverages alone will speed up transactions," Heverling said. "That makes it easier for folks to see what we have and make decisions in a timely way. Then they can get their food and get back to the action."

The network also supports prepaid parking in the best lot as determined by each fan. "That isn't always necessarily the closest spot. It might be more advantageous to be in a different lot based on how someone wants to leave an event," Heverling said.

The new networking makes it easy to gather data, enabling officials to determine which gates to open or close and where to add more staff. “Those types of things will continue to improve because of the resources we have now,” he added.

Collaborators in innovation

AT&T Wi-Fi 6, combined with sophisticated dashboards and systems that monitor fan activity, will further enable SS&E and the Frost Bank Center to anticipate and head off problems. “We can even go as deep as measuring fan sentiment,” Heverling said. “We are very far down the road on this, which is why it’s so important for us to have the backbone that we have now.”

Loomis is grateful to AT&T for developing the technology that will enable SS&E to provide greater in-game entertainment. “AT&T is one of the leaders in the telecommunication industry,” he said. “We’ve had great history working with them. Their technologies have helped us accomplish a lot for our fans. They are great collaborators, and we think the AT&T Wi-Fi 6 and 5G provide a great opportunity to build on.”

Loomis also noted that SS&E’s expertise in the fan perspective and the technology leadership from AT&T Business pair to deliver the best fan experience.

Heverling said AT&T has a “best-in-class” outlook, which is important to SS&E and the Frost Bank Center. “We’re a championship-driven organization,” he said. “That’s a mindset, not necessarily hoisting a trophy all the time. And we want to be associated with providers that have a similar best-in-class attitude and commitment to always trying to improve and innovate.”

Efficient, streamlined processes

SS&E continues to innovate to deliver exceptional guest experiences. “It seems that almost every year we have something new that keeps things fresh and keeps fans coming back for new experiences and new memories,” Heverling said. “They show their appreciation by showing up and having a good time.”

Loomis likes the fact that the efforts are made for the benefit of all guests. “The focus is on everyone that comes into the building, not just those that are sitting courtside or in the luxury suites,” he said. “Everyone in the building has the chance to get the benefits of 5G and Wi-Fi 6.”

The network also makes it easier for reporters to cover sporting events and for SS&E and Frost Bank Center staff to do their jobs, Heverling said. “Having more efficient, streamlined processes for our fans allows our staff to spend less time helping execute certain tasks, and more time interacting with our fans,” he said.

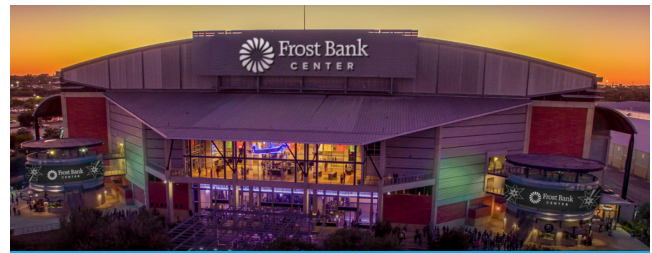


It's all about the fans

SS&E is looking forward to moving beyond the pandemic and welcoming large crowds back to the Frost Bank Center. “We’re really excited about what comes on the other side of this pandemic,” Heverling said. “We want folks getting back to live entertainment, which is our core product. I think people are going to come back in a big way when it’s safe to do so. And we want to be there with some innovative experiences.”

The organization has spent a lot of time in the last few months analyzing the way it responded to COVID. “We were really careful about picking the mitigations that we felt had legs beyond COVID,” Heverling said.

Adding AT&T Wi-Fi 6 and the AT&T 5G environment means new opportunities for SS&E to innovate, which ultimately makes for a better customer experience. “This is all about the fans and serving them the best we can,” Heverling said.



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