

The Washington Post

Reaching new audiences amid the pandemic through **AT&T 5G** and **LTE mobile broadband**

- **Business needs** - Technology to support reporters, editors, and engineers working remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T 5G connectivity and related technologies deliver cost-effective access, lower latency, faster speeds, and greater control.
- **Business value** - Keeping readers informed while using high-performance technology that connects news teams and audiences.
- **Industry focus** - Journalism
- **Size** - 2.5 million+ digital subscribers

About The Washington Post

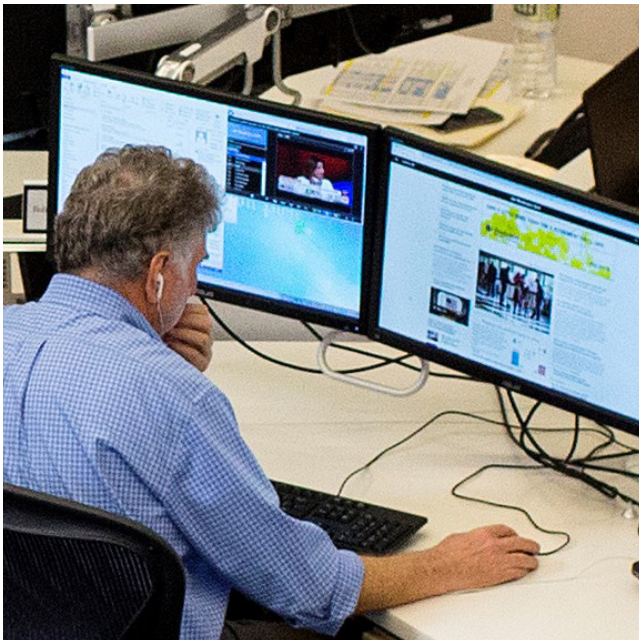
The Washington Post is a news organization founded in 1877. The Post has a digital audience of more than 90 million visitors each month and an additional 42 million readers internationally visiting it each month. It is also the most widely circulated newspaper within the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. The Post has won 69 Pulitzer Prizes for achievements in journalism, most notably for its investigation into the Watergate scandal. Previously owned by the Graham family for 70 years, The Post today is owned by Jeffrey P. Bezos, the founder and chief executive of Amazon.com.

The situation

Like most organizations, The Washington Post was forced to alter its operations when COVID-19 descended. The organization needed a way for its journalists to submit their work—with immense video and audio files—from remote locations.

Solution

AT&T recommended its 5G and LTE mobile broadband network to supply connectivity with speeds capable of meeting Post reporters' upload and download requirements. The AT&T mobile network offers the speed, capacity, and lower latency that supports collaboration among Washington Post journalists and audio and video engineers.



Building on a legacy of excellence

Journalism has changed dramatically in the 143 years since The Washington Post began publishing. While outstanding print journalism remains keenly relevant, audiences today demand enhanced content, including access to audio and video stories. Most are unwilling to wait until the next day's newspaper is published to be updated on developments.

Jeremy Gilbert, Director of Strategic Initiatives for The Washington Post, said the organization is not

satisfied to rest on its laurels, but continues to expand the ways it keeps its subscribers informed. "What makes it rewarding to work at the Post is the fact that the organization is rooted in the heritage of a journalistic institution, and The Post has made a significant transition over the last seven years to digital storytelling," he said.

Today's staff are cognizant of the outstanding work of the reporters and editors who preceded them. "When you show up at work you know the people who came in the doors before you covered the Pentagon Papers and Watergate and any number of other really powerful stories," he said. "And when you go to the daily news meeting you walk past the 60-plus Pulitzer Prizes won by staffers at The Washington Post."

The Post was already an important national voice when Amazon founder Jeff Bezos bought the paper in 2013. At that time, the paper increased its efforts to introduce new ways of delivering content. The focus on digital storytelling has significantly enlarged the paper's sphere of influence. Today, The Post's digital audience comprises more than 100 million visitors each month. "We are covering the country and the world for a much larger audience than we could have ever been imagined," Gilbert said. "And yet we can still do it at the same level of quality that The Post has always delivered."

Technology advances the mission

Gilbert's responsibilities as Director of Strategic Initiatives include considering new technologies and techniques to enhance newsgathering and coverage. "We want to make new kinds of storytelling experiences for our audience," he said.

Gilbert and his colleagues work to understand the different ways people would like to receive news and choose the technologies to capture and deliver stories. “That’s the ever-evolving challenge and that’s what I really love about my job,” he said. “The problems and the challenges are never the same.”

These days, the work includes solving the technology difficulties of reporters and editors and thinking about how The Post can use technology to advance its mission. Gilbert credits Post Executive Editor Martin “Marty” Baron with transforming the paper’s approach. “He understood intimately that what the nation needed—and what The Post needed to be—was a media organization that wasn’t tethered to a medium like only print or only digital but could transcend the medium,” he said. “Marty focuses on telling great stories in the way that’s appropriate to reach the audience where it will have the most impact.”

Gilbert said the executive editor often looks at the same story on multiple platforms. “He sets the tone that says, ‘All the ways that we can tell stories matter, not just the legacy ways.’”

Moving toward the audience

Under Baron’s leadership, Post reporters began disseminating news using new media like messaging and video creation apps. “When we started publishing our stories on different platforms, not only were we reaching an audience that was very unusual for The Washington Post, but there aren’t a lot of credible news sources like The Washington Post that are telling their stories there,” Gilbert said. “That’s an example of our moving towards the audience.”

One of The Post’s video journalists started publishing on an app that shares seconds-long videos because it was fun, and he loved the energy of the platform. “He has been able to build a very loyal following with a very different kind of news and a very different way to represent The Post brand,” Gilbert said. Other news organizations have since followed The Post’s lead. “We went there because we thought it was engaging and interesting, and then the audience and our competitors followed.”

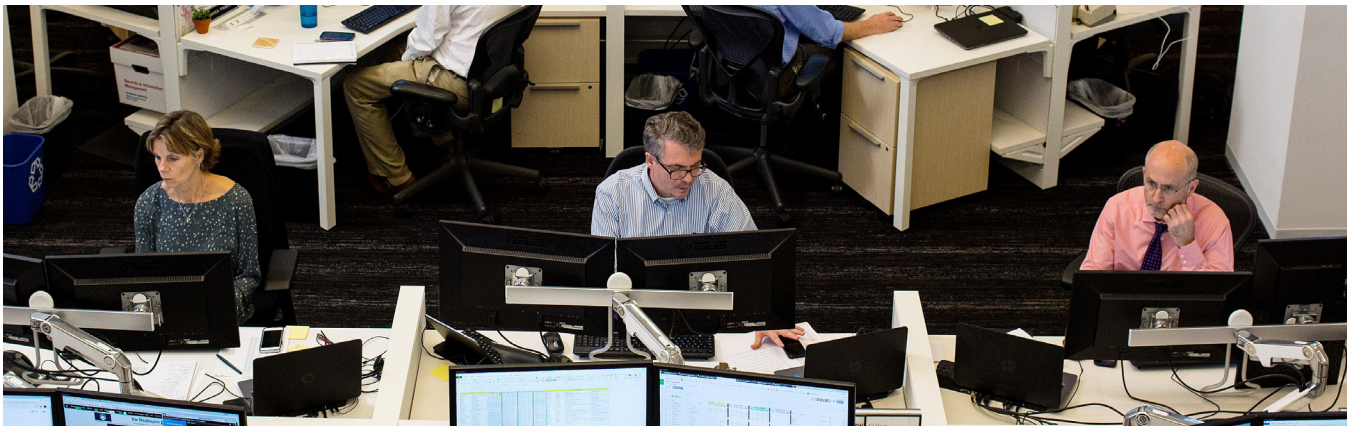
Using multiple channels to disseminate news became a greater challenge as COVID-19 proliferated globally. “It’s nearly impossible for a news organization like The Post, or any really, to prepare for a pandemic,” Gilbert said. “The impact on the ways we work toward our goals is almost incalculable. But at the same time, I think The Post has proved really resilient.”

New ways to collaborate

In the early days of the pandemic, Post journalists and other employees began working from home instead of in the newsroom with the high-tech audio and video studios the paper had constructed. This required everyone—but especially the audio and video engineers—to radically change the way they worked.

“When you’re facing daily deadlines, finding ways to collaborate quickly and effectively is essential.”

Jeremy Gilbert
Director of Strategic Initiatives



Collaboration is a vital part of The Post's modus operandi. "Especially at the beginning of the pandemic, we needed to figure out how to enable that collaboration when virtually everyone was in a different place," Gilbert said. "So over time we have learned how to cover a presidential convention or a debate remotely, but we do it remotely together."

Finding new ways to work together while physically separated was only part of the difficulty. "We don't control the kinds of internet speeds that people have at home and don't necessarily control access to the equipment," Gilbert said. Most of The Post's employees' homes lacked the bandwidth they needed to share large audio and video files.

This made it difficult to produce "Post Reports," the organization's popular afternoon podcast. The multi-segment program features a host and several stories told by different reporters. "You have the individual reporter and the host recording audio, with multiple segments getting bounced back and forth between different producers and editors on the audio team," Gilbert said.

"We had to find a way to move large amounts of data between the teams very rapidly, regardless of the

quality of the home internet connection. When you're facing daily deadlines, finding ways to collaborate quickly and effectively is essential."

Overcoming real-world challenges

The Post reached out to its AT&T Business account representative for recommendations. "It was a tremendous advantage to be able to go to AT&T and say, 'Here are the problems that our team is facing,'" Gilbert said.

AT&T provided wireless wide area networking capabilities to The Post's reporters and engineers. They were able to do this thanks to the NetCloud-enabled Cradlepoint E300 Gigabit-LTE routers and AT&T Wireless Broadband connectivity.

The solution delivers the robust bandwidth The Post needs to publish the news on the variety of platforms it uses to reach readers, viewers, and listeners on the medium of their choice. "AT&T connectivity over a Cradlepoint router enabled our director of audio to set up an external antenna and then convert an LTE signal into Wi-Fi," Gilbert said. "That was the best way to get her the speed to be able to pass around all the audio files."

AT&T Business also supplied one of the newspaper's video journalists with an advance demo version of a high-end cellphone to support the video programs she livestreams from her home over the AT&T network. The journalist uses the phone as a hotspot to deliver speed and highly reliable connectivity. "The particular challenge and particular place that the person was located dictated how we maximized the signal," Gilbert said.

The hotspot solution worked well, enabling the journalist to disseminate quality broadcasts from her dining room table. "We're not talking about ideal conditions," Gilbert said. "We're talking about very real-world challenges, and that was the best option."

Different ways to tell the story

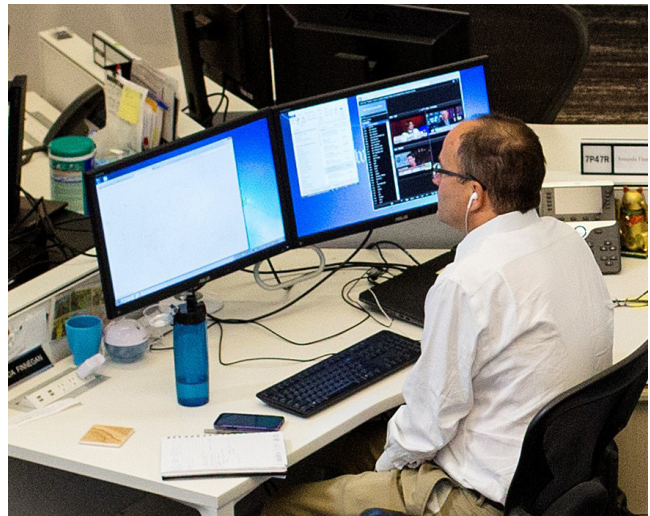
As the pandemic wanes in some parts of the country and reporters are again working out in the community, AT&T is helping The Post overcome other difficulties. "We have some journalists who are trying to report the story of the recovery, and one of their challenges is transmitting huge gigapixel images from the field," he said.

AT&T continues to work with The Post to overcome challenges as they arise. "What I have really valued when we've had problems is being able to work with the AT&T team. They've given us different ideas and different approaches," Gilbert said, "and they did a great job of connecting us to other partners and vendors who could help us with particular solutions."

Gilbert values being able to get help from AT&T with connectivity problems that The Post has not been

able to solve. "There is no doubt that with some of these connectivity solutions we were able to put out a higher quality program and really enable much better collaboration," he said. "Having the right answers to connectivity problems makes everything else possible."

"It's all about that ability to ask questions," Gilbert said. "We hear about solutions that we just didn't know existed. We specialize in storytelling, and when we run into these connectivity challenges, we often need advice about what's out there. We do our research, but we don't have all the expertise that we need in house. So our relationship with AT&T Business is very helpful."



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