

Political parties find common ground:

Agile, highly secure AT&T
solutions take center stage
at 2016 National Conventions

- **Business Needs** - Facilitate communication among delegates, media, staff and guests at the 2016 Democratic and Republican National Conventions, and enable audiences everywhere to connect to the historic events
- **Networking Solution** - Integrated network solutions, including seamless wireless, wireline, mobility, security and television services
- **Business Value** - Universal connectivity enabled unprecedented access for those at the convention and millions more streaming the events live
- **Industry Focus** - U.S. political party conventions
- **Size** - About 100,000 at each convention each day

About the Democratic National Convention Committee/Republican National Convention Committee on Arrangements

The Democratic and Republican National Conventions are the formal nominating events at which the nation's preeminent political parties name their candidates for President and Vice President and create party platforms. The 2016 Democratic convention, managed by the Democratic National Convention Committee (DNCC), was held in Philadelphia, and the Republican Convention, coordinated by the Republican National Convention Committee on Arrangements (RNC COA), took place in Cleveland. Voter excitement was extremely high this year, and both conventions attracted large crowds to the convention centers and millions more who watched on television or streamed events live via the Internet.

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Situation

Organizing a political convention is a massive undertaking, with thousands of details to manage in support of convention delegates' important work. As part of staging each four-day event, the coordinating committees were responsible for creating a communications infrastructure that would accommodate tens of thousands of delegates, media representatives, campaign staff, party members, speakers and the party faithful that assemble at each convention – a bee hive of power-users of IT. It was essential that both conventions create a resilient infrastructure to satisfy their demanding users.

Solution

The Republican and Democratic convention committees made creative use of technology to produce lively, innovative and forward-looking conventions. AT&T supplied the robust network that connected all delegates, staff, media and guests at both conventions, including wireless, wireline, mobility, security and television services. In addition to involving audiences at both convention centers, AT&T helped the parties share the excitement of the convention with constituencies well beyond Cleveland and Philadelphia to include more Americans than ever before.



Satisfying Extraordinary Demand

The 2016 U.S. Presidential elections engaged millions of Americans and captured the attention of observers around the world. While the two major political parties found few areas of agreement in their platforms, they both elected to work with AT&T to make their quadrennial conventions resounding successes. The RNC COA named AT&T the official communications, video and technology provider for its convention in Cleveland and the DNCC selected AT&T as its official communications and technology provider for the Philadelphia convention. As such, AT&T supplied the network that connected multitudes of participants at the two conventions and millions more globally with integrated suites of services that delivered in the face of unprecedented demand.

Cybersecurity guru Max Everett, who has been the Chief Information Officer of every Republican convention since 2004, has seen demand for connectivity explode over the past 16 years. “Delegates had Blackberries in 2004 and early iPhones in 2008, and by 2012 in Tampa there was a lot of focus on taking and sharing photos on social media,” Everett said. “Move forward to 2016 and everybody’s talking about streaming live video from the event – that’s just exponential growth. The expectations around connectivity and communication are so much higher now.”

Meeting the demand for bandwidth was also a priority for Andrew Binns, a technology expert and Chief Innovation Officer of the DNCC, who has been involved with Democratic conventions since he started as a help desk technician in 2004. “We had to make sure that everyone could work efficiently and quickly and wherever they wanted,” he said.



“AT&T’s advanced network was vital, because everyone operates so much on their phones. And because there are hundreds of ways to consume content, we focused on using technology to reach each one of these individuals wherever they were and however they wanted to consume content.”

Delivering content on demand, however, required major investments in fiber and wireless networking to support the communications needs of the anticipated giant crowds the committees.

In addition to anticipating network capacity, each committee also had to arrange for all communications processes to support DNCC and RNC COA staff during the many months of planning the conventions; this included setting up mobile phone and email accounts for staff and providing access to each committee’s systems, tools and network resources. They also had to procure teleconferencing, messaging, and security services. Putting all the pieces in place was complicated by the organizations’ small IT staffs, and the high-stakes nature of the events. “We only get one shot at this,” Binns said. “It’s live on TV for 12 hours a day, so we had to make sure that everything went off perfectly and that we had thought through and planned for every possibility,”

Working together for Performance and Protection

AT&T supplied the flexibility both party organizations needed to support their long-term strategies and maximize the short-term opportunities the conventions presented, with an array of open and highly secure network services. “Partners like AT&T are really what allow us to go on,” Everett said. “We just didn’t have the bodies and often didn’t necessarily have the knowledge to do all the things

that we had to do. AT&T was thinking about this event far in advance.” AT&T’s intelligent processes and experience in supporting major events gave both CIOs confidence. “We leaned a lot on our partners like AT&T,” Binns said, and Everett noted, “They brought a lot of different things to the table.”

To meet the extraordinary demand for bandwidth, AT&T delivered wireless network enhancements that included 4G and LTE capacity upgrades inside the convention centers and in the surrounding neighborhoods, Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS) and Cells on Wheels (COWs) at the arenas, and installation of small-cell solutions in hotels and other key venues in Cleveland and Philadelphia. “We were all very concerned because there were so many people, but the network worked great,” Everett said.

“Reporters would ask me about the wireless at the arena and I told them that we literally were up to the boundaries of physics. We could not have put any more wireless antennas in there without popping popcorn on the floor, but it worked brilliantly.” AT&T also supplied smartphones, projectors, mobile Internet hot-spots and AT&T Messaging Toolkit, a multi-channel messaging platform that enabled the parties to reach huge audiences by text, email, chat, voice broadcast, and social media.

Security was a major concern, Binns said, especially considering this year’s highly publicized hacking of political parties’ networks. “We worked with AT&T on best practices and how we should handle these issues,” Binns said. AT&T uses a multi-layered, integrated approach to help secure at the device, connectivity and data application layers to protect clients’ sensitive information. To manage their large cellphone deployments and safeguard sensitive information on phones and tablets, the



DNCC and RNC COA used AirWatch® Mobile Device Management from AT&T. The solution made it easy for the organizations to lock down lost or stolen devices.

The DNCC also made extensive use of AT&T teleconferencing services, especially in the months leading up to the convention. “Our departments used it a lot for smaller daily meetings, but there were times when we needed to connect 500 people for question and answer sessions,” Binns said. “Teleconferencing was huge for us.”

AT&T U-Verse® and DIRECTV® accommodated the RNCC’s “political junkies who always need to know what’s going on,” Everett said. “Having DIRECTV made an enormous difference, especially for our staff working in windowless rooms under the arena. We had TVs scattered all over the convention center and in all of the hospitality areas for the media that were working there,” he said. DIRECTV also provided connections for the media outlets that bought in more than 1,000 of their own TV sets. “AT&T allowed the media and all the guests and other people at the convention to be able to see all the closed circuit and the major news networks while they were working, for free,” Everett said. “That’s never happened before at any convention.”

At the Democratic convention, AT&T helped the DNCC create Studio 2016, a high-tech production facility within the convention center that broadcasted satellite and radio interviews of top news makers and produced DNC Live, nightly programming hosted by celebrities and personalities designed to reach millennial voters.

Sharing a Front Row Seat to History

AT&T helped the RNC COA and the DNCC create custom event apps that delivered convention content, including live video streaming and virtually seamless integration with social media. The apps included speech transcripts, schedules and tools designed to help delegates navigate the convention and the city in which it was held. Beyond assisting people at the convention, the app was designed to engage audiences, “whether they were in the convention center or thousands of miles away,” Binns said. “Our app provided an essential tool and a front-row seat to history.”

Maps of the convention venues and the surrounding city provided information about places to visit and specialized content about restaurants that stayed open late to accommodate delegates after a long day of meetings. “We knew early on that if we wanted to give people real-time information during the event, an app would be the absolute best way,” Everett said. “It was a value-add for our audience.”

The apps helped both convention committees manage huge logistical challenges, including transportation for thousands of delegates each day of the convention. AT&T outfitted more than 350 vehicles with a suite of software and hardware solutions that enabled the DNCC to dispatch and track vehicles as needed. **“We were able to connect with people who wanted a ride and arrange a pickup very quickly,” Binns said. “It also allowed drivers to connect with one another. It was pretty amazing.”** In Cleveland, the RNC COA used AT&T Enhanced Push-to-Talk service to help ferry between 15,000 and 20,000 people a day to and from the convention center. The solution enabled officials



to reroute buses in real time in case of traffic or a maintenance issue. “One of the challenges was that it was very late in the game before we had all of the routes finalized and so putting in place all the programming happened much closer to the end than any of us would have liked,” Everett said. “We didn’t have that capacity in-house and so we really had to rely on AT&T’s help.”

Amazing Support

Both convention officials stressed the importance of cultivating strong relationships with providers. **“The support that we received, the problem solving that occurred, being able to think outside the box and being amenable to approaching problems differently than you might with standard corporate entity,” Binns said. “Those were all unbelievably amazing; AT&T made sure that we could do what we needed to.”**

This support included the freedom to call for assistance whenever it was needed, he added. “I can call at 11:30 on a Tuesday night and the account team and the support team all the way up and down the chain would pick up and act on whatever was going on,” he said. “If there was an issue that had to be solved at 11:30 at night, it would get solved at 11:30 at night.” Advance planning with AT&T that began more than a year before the convention meant that late-night calls were few and far between, Binns said. “But whenever we needed it, the support was out of this world.”

Everett said the RNC COA was also pleased with the assistance his organization has received. **“AT&T’s help was so critical; we couldn’t have done what we did without them,”** he said. He believes

the smooth operation of the convention to be a function of choosing partners with the capability to do an event of enormous size and scope. “There are some unique characteristics of the convention and the user base, and AT&T gets that. We don’t have to explain it.” In addition to providing the powerful network infrastructure that supported the convention, he said, AT&T handled many other needs like providing the text messaging system, DIRECTV and U-Verse, that added greatly to its success. “The reality is that things worked flawlessly. I did not hear a complaint from the media, our staff, or any other folks that were there. It was really it could not have gone better and we could not have been happier.”

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In an era when relationships can be fleeting and it can be difficult to find common ground, both political parties have maintained strong working relationships with AT&T. **Everett said he considers AT&T to be more than just a vendor. “We had some top-notch partners, but AT&T’s folks were far and away the most helpful to us and really were more than anyone else a part of our team,” he said. “That meant a lot to us.”** Binns also reflected on the steadfast relationship between AT&T and the DNCC. “AT&T has been a long-standing partner that has been extraordinarily helpful over so many cycles,” he said. **“We’ve never come to AT&T with an issue or a problem that hasn’t been solved. It’s been an amazing partnership and I couldn’t ask for a better partner.”**

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