



UTILITIES

Muscatine Power and Water

FORE-Powered Network Delivers the Right Services at the Right Time for MP&W

The impending deregulation of the electric industry has today's utilities working to prepare for the resulting increase in competition. To retain existing customers and withstand the growing number of new competitors entering the market, utilities are seeking the technology resources to keep delivery rates low while offering expanded services.

Business Challenge

Like all utilities across the United States, Muscatine Power and Water (MP&W) is preparing for increased competition, an anticipated result of the impending deregulation of the electric industry. To this end, the utility is aggressively initiating new ways to deliver innovative communications services to its customers while keeping rates low and efficiency high. Located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Muscatine, Iowa, MP&W is the state's largest municipal water and electric utility. To provide city residents and surrounding areas with communications services in addition to its current electric and water services, MP&W has constructed a state-of-the-art communications infrastructure consisting of a hybrid fiber coaxial (HFC) system and a municipal area network (MAN) featuring a network solution from FORE Systems, which serves as the backbone for the company's communications utility. The new communications system guarantees users access to the Internet, along with an array of residential customer services including cable TV and cable modems. In addition to these immediate services, MP&W is now technologically poised to offer many additional business and residential services in the future, including local and long distance telephone service, cellular phone service, home security systems, video on demand, teleconferencing, real-time pricing of electric and electric/water remote meter reading.

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Sal LoBianco

*Communication Utility Project Manager
Muscatine Power and Water*

Technology Solution: Why FORE

Recognizing the community's desire for an alternative to the local provider, along with its own need to prepare for the potential market opportunities created by the projected deregulation, MP&W decided to create a two-way hybrid fiber coaxial backbone and municipal area network throughout the Muscatine community. The new network backbone would bring community residents new and better communications services, such as cable television, Internet access, and data communication via high-speed cable modems. In addition, the MAN network - using an ATM-based networking solution from FORE - was vital to attracting business to the community to enhance overall economic development.

ATM technology was the ideal choice for MP&W's network due to its ability to support voice, video and data. "ATM is the only standards-based networking technology capable of supporting our services goals" said Sal LoBianco, communication utility project manager for MP&W. "It combines the reliability, flexibility, and Quality of Service(QoS) that is essential for meeting the changing needs of our customers and the utility itself."

Prior to implementing its network project, MP&W conducted extensive research and quickly found that FORE offered the best solution to meet the utility's needs. Their findings were also supported by network consulting companies, which the utility hired to assist with the design and implementation of its network. "FORE's reliance on standards, their extensive experience with ATM technology and their price leadership convinced us without a doubt that they were the best choice for our network," said LoBianco.

The FORE network provides MP&W with a state-of-the-art municipal area network, which carries large amounts of data at very fast speeds and supports advanced capabilities that were not currently available in Muscatine, such as high-speed data/Internet services.

Business Advantage

Muscatine Power and Water's ATM network provides the company with essential technology capabilities to capture a greater share of the local market. At the same time, the benefits of ATM have since extended beyond MP&W's doors to the entire Muscatine community. MP&W's new ATM network, which has been in place for over a year, supports a wide array of customer services that enhance local businesses and promote continued economic development.

The network, which connects businesses to Muscatine's MAN, provides a direct fiber optic connection between various sites similar to a wide area network (WAN), for high-speed data connectivity between multiple business locations. The MAN also enables businesses to transmit data, voice and video much faster than alternative systems currently available in Muscatine. For example, a file transfer that took more than five minutes over a company's existing service now takes less than 30 seconds with MP&W's FORE-powered MAN.

The revenues generated from the additional services that MP&W can provide with its new network will remain in the Muscatine community since the company is a municipal utility. And just as importantly, MP&W plans to promote its ATM network as a powerful tool in providing economic vitality for existing businesses in Muscatine, which, in turn, will help attract new business and investments to the local community. For this reason, MP&W believes that the company, as well as the Muscatine community, got much more than they had originally bargained for with the FORE network. "When you consider all of these factors," said LoBianco, "there is no doubt that our FORE network has provided an excellent return on our investment - and will continue to do so for many years to come."



FORE Systems has successfully installed ATM technology to support corporate networks at thousands of businesses and industries worldwide. To learn how FORE Systems can help you build ATM Networks of Steel™ that meet your challenges in the Municipal Electric Utility market, contact your local FORE Systems representative, visit our Web site at <http://www.fore.com> or call us toll-free at 1-888-404-4444.

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