Case Study

1623 Farnam: The Center of the Silicon Prairie

How a Premier Location Serves as a Key Interconnection Hub for OPTK Networks

Background

OPTK Networks, formerly NebraskaLink, provides fiber optic networks throughout the Midwest, specializing in provider-class internet connectivity and multi-site architecture. The company delivers diversified routing and redundant facilities to governments, educational institutions, wholesale carriers, and internet service providers. In addition they serve the business community - including the healthcare, financial, manufacturing, and agriculture sectors – by emphasizing their strengths with multi-site WAN architecture.

For OPTK, their team is their primary asset. "We are truly a company that lives by our **values statement**," explains VP Business Development, Jason Axthelm. For Axthelm that means dependability and certainty. "We like to think of it as living out our midwestern values. We do what we say and we say what we do. We want to first and foremost be very reliable players. When you need service and consistency, when we commit to a date and need to address repairs - first and foremost it comes down to our values and we live by that. We think it's one of the main reasons we have deeper engagement with a lot of our clientele."

Challenge

OPTK began seeing a keen growth in demand for capacity, and realized a need to boost the networks of wholesale clients, be they carriers, data center operators, or enterprises. The demand centered around high capacity wavelength dark fiber, 10G or 100G waves that could connect into other carrier hotel locations. After careful consideration, OPTK resolved to complete a long-haul fiber connection from Denver to a termination point in the Midwest. Building new paths to other regional data centers would provide diversity to their portfolio, and the folks at OPTK were excited about how the new path range would bring fresh opportunities to clients. After selecting an endpoint in Denver, where would the Midwest end terminate? And how would they choose the most optimal location?

Solution

Partners since 2011, OPTK had a longstanding relationship with 1623 Farnam. That said, OPTK boasts extensive connectivity throughout other facilities in Omaha and the surrounding region, and were spoiled for choice when constructing their Colorado fiber route. When OPTK weighed all of their options and decided on 1623 Farnam as their colocation point, it was for several chief reasons.

To start, 1623 Farnam's past interactions with OPTK had shown alignment from a values perspective, one of their prized aspects when closing a deal. "We have good synergy with 1623 Farnam and we've always seen eye-to-eye on things," remarks Axthelm. Next, business dealings with 1623 Farnam proved to be fruitful from a dollars-and-cents standpoint. "1623 Farnam is the location where we meet a lot of customers," says Axthelm. "We have found over the years that when new customers come into the market, they land at 1623 Farnam first. When we've worked with them to extend to other locations, we see that it's an advantageous location. There is just so much happening. We call it the Silicon Prairie."

The final aspect attracting OPTK to 1623 Farnam for the project lies in the data center's considerable **expansion**. For Axthelm "When [VP Sales] Linn [Gowen] talked us through all the upgrades on the go, we realized that making a conscious effort to pair with them on this would create such a great opportunity to have clientele on new, diverse paths." The $40 million buildout, announced in Summer 2020 will significantly heighten the facility's ability to provide rapid deployment and ease of access for establishing new fiber connections. OPTK's path to Denver, now fully constructed, has proved to be a great success for their growing **network**.

"1623 Farnam is a premier location for us, and it has proven to be a great meeting point. We are excited to see how data connectivity has impacted Omaha and what the future will bring to the market."

Jason Axthelm,
VP Business Development, OPTK Networks