



Rural America
is going fast.
NISC will help you go far.

United Fiber's Broadband Deployment

United Fiber, a subsidiary of United Electric Cooperative located in Savannah, Mo., has been providing broadband services to their membership since 2011. United Electric serves 7,900 members and roughly 10,000 meters, covering about 2.5 meters per mile of line.

After a survey to their membership, United realized that nearly 70 percent of their members didn't have access to good broadband. So, the electric cooperative took advantage of a Rural Utilities Service (RUS) stimulus grant that allowed them to begin a broadband deployment in Northwestern Missouri.

Today, United Fiber's broadband project has grown tremendously. Providing the standard triple-play options – internet, voice and video – United Fiber now serves 5,000 members with broadband services, 40 percent of which utilize the voice service and 50 percent utilize them for video. They also have a supplementary wireless service, bringing their overall telecommunications customer base around 6,000. Not only do they serve residential customers, but more than 900 commercial businesses in Northwestern Missouri.

"We originally needed to hit 2,700 connections for it to be considered a successful project," said David Girvan, Chief Operating Officer at United Fiber. "We hit that number early and it validated what we thought. We continued to grow at a breakneck speed."

While there is a lot of physical work that needs to be done to roll out a fiber network, the software behind that network is also a very important piece of the puzzle. United has been an NISC Member for 20 years, so they turned to their technology partner for help. With 50 years of serving both the telecom and utility industries, NISC had the knowledge and the solution to help United Fiber launch their broadband product.



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Growth and System Challenges

While quick growth is very exciting for any project, it also brings with it several challenges that are unique to an electric utility deploying telecommunications solutions for the first time.

One of those unique challenges was finding a unified approach to managing customer interactions between the electric and broadband sides of the business. While their combined iVUE® solution was able to help them serve a new market, many of the processes were very manual, especially managing the service order lifecycle. When it came to provisioning new broadband services, each one had to be provisioned manually...creating a swivel chair effect, going from one system to the next to manage each order.

Another issue that arose is the ability to track and manage leads. As members decide which services to take, there are opportunities for expansion and keeping track of those opportunities is extremely important. United Fiber did track and manage their leads, but the process was very manual – utilizing spreadsheets and other processes to track and manage customer interest in these new products.

“We didn’t know what we didn’t know,” Girvan said. “Our broadband rollout was more successful than we expected, which is great, but we had a few issues that we never expected to have.”

The growth and acceptance of broadband was better and more exciting than United had ever expected, but they needed a way to increase the efficiency of delivering and managing these broadband solutions.

iVUE Connect® Service with Broadband Functionality

In November of 2017, United Fiber was the first NISC Member to launch iVUE Connect Service with broadband functionality, a unified platform that enables NISC Members to provide the full complement of triple play services including auto-provisioning. It also supports the needs of the contemporary utility by enabling a smarter grid.

With iVUE Connect Service, United was able to eliminate the swivel chair, provisioning multiple solutions with the click of a button. The process of adding new broadband services became quick and easy, leading to more efficient and effective customer service. United can now auto-provision their Calix access equipment, Momentum telephone and Minerva video triple-play services in one space quickly and easily.

United has also enabled NISC’s SmartHub® Web and mobile application, which allows customers to submit payments and interact with their provider anywhere, anytime.

Partnering with NISC has allowed United to gain these efficiencies not only in the office, but also while provisioning and managing services in the field. NISC’s iVUE AppSuite mobile solution provides a paperless process for managing new service installations.

“When someone calls us, whether they have electric service, sewer service or fiber service, you’re all on one screen to us,” said Jim Bagley, CEO of United Electric Cooperative. “We can see you as a total member, which allows us to see if there’s a better way to serve you. It makes us more efficient on the phone and makes us look more professional.”

United has also been able to leverage NISC’s LeadAgent™ solution to help streamline and manage leads, proposals and contracting processes, eliminating the spreadsheets and manual tracking of the past.

United Fiber continues to see growth in their broadband solutions. Partnering with NISC on the software has created efficiencies that will allow them to meet that growth head on and continue to manage their solutions into the future.

“Partner with partners, not vendors,” Girvan said. “We’ve had good partners along the way that supported us, engaged with us. Good partners will make this easy.”

