

Connection

Helping organizations achieve greater value through the advancement of fiber optic telecommunications

Manager's Message

By Evan Hass, GM

A bigger footprint

This is a great time of year with so many things to look forward to and winter in the rear view mirror. I have always enjoyed the excitement of basketball season and the year end tournaments. As the grass turns green, I am always excited about baseball, golf, fishing, etc.

There are also many things to be excited about at Dakota Carrier Network. This year finds DCN expanding our footprint and growing the backbone network to better provide customers the wide area connections they need.

Our first expansion this year came with the recent turn up of new wavelengths that will connect between the DCN network in Fargo and Minneapolis/St. Paul. This 10 Gbps high speed connection has become part of our infrastructure carrying customer connections as well as providing additional Internet bandwidth that will link to diverse upstream Internet carriers.

This expansion is a welcome addition to our network design.

The second expansion will take place with the beginning of spring in western North Dakota.

DCN offers business continuity options for data storage

Customer requests have encouraged Dakota Carrier Network to begin providing businesses in North Dakota options for backing up and storing critical data in hardened, secure facilities.

According to Seth Arndorfer, business development manager, these business continuity services provide protection from many kinds of threats, ranging from cataclysmic weather to cyber crimes and computer system failures.

"In today's business environment, many organizations are solely reliant on the integrity and security of their electronic data," says Arndorfer. "According to a 2004 Gartner Study, enterprise businesses double their data volume every 12 to 18 months, and a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports notes that 93 percent of all companies that experience significant data loss are out of business in five years. Furthermore, 70 percent of companies that back up data locally will be unable to restore their backup data due to damaged or faulty tapes, according to the report."

Technology provides two continuity options

Utilizing DCN's 10 Gbps Ethernet backbone, business continuity customers can access backup services



Security key fobs provide access to DCN for co-location customers that can include co-location of customer equipment or backup data storage. Customer-owned hardware and software can be co-located in the hardened, weather-resistant buildings

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Co-location space includes equipment racks that can be leased in increments

Manager's Message

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The November blizzard ground the construction to a halt as large snow drifts made it impossible to complete the fiber project linking the DCN North Dakota network with the SDN Communications South Dakota network.

This jointly provided network will complete a ring spanning from Fargo to Bismarck to Rapid City to Sioux Falls and back to Fargo. The 10 Gbps ring will be used by DCN and SDN to provide customer services between our two networks, expanding the footprint that serves our wide area network customers.

The third expansion takes place within the state of North Dakota as added wavelengths will be created to grow the Ethernet and SONET backbones to handle the rapid growth in customer networks. This represents an increase in the size of the network if not the geography covered.

Looking at the footprint at the local level in 2009 the DCN fiber will continue to grow in Bismarck, Fargo and Grand Forks. Additional segments of future fiber rings will be placed that will evolve into metro rings needed for access to our customer locations.

DCN is creating a regional footprint that will better serve our customers with locations beyond North Dakota. Each of these expansions are done with the DCN criteria of reliability and redundancy that are valued by all of our customers.

Business continuity(continued)

that house DCN's operation in Fargo and/or Bismarck. Other customers may choose to back up data from off-site locations with IBM Data Storage disc-to-disc server assemblies for greater levels of performance, reliability, and/or larger data volumes.

"For customers that choose to co-locate at either of our locations, they will get 24/7 access to the building and hardware racks secured with a combination lock," Arndorfer says. "Due to the strength of our redundant fiber optic network and carrier class infrastructure, we have a 13-year track record of more than 99.9995 percent network reliability. We provide this same quality of service to business continuity customers backing up data at DCN. Add the fact that diesel generators provide emergency power, and we can assure them of the best possible security situation for their data."

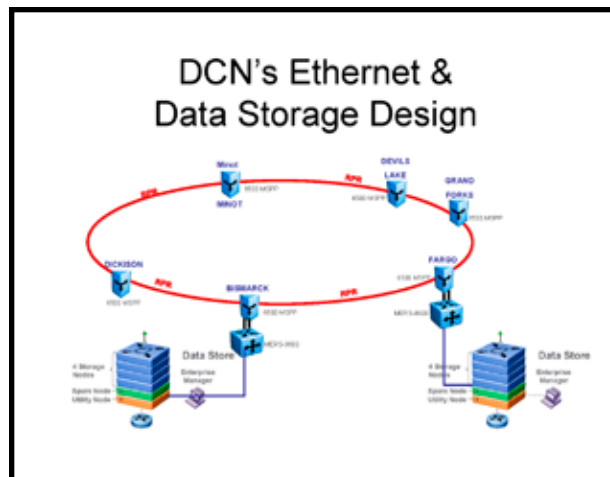


Co-location can take place at the Fargo Point of Presence (POP) above and/or the Bismarck Network Operations Center (NOC)

Warm or cold data restoration

Co-location customers can also utilize the DCN buildings in emergencies should a weather-related disaster impede their own company-based data system. Both DCN locations feature 'clean' electrical power run through an inverter system, eliminating the potential for damage from power spikes.

"By providing 'mirror' storage at both our locations, we can effectively help store our customers' data at three places, including their own office," he says. "Customers can use our 'burstable' bandwidth for initial downloads and then use cost-effective incremental transfers for later downloads, which they can do on their own schedule ... real time, daily, weekly, whatever suits their business."



Internet equipment saves space

The equipment room at DCN's Bismarck Network Operations Center feels less crowded these days. That's because a new Digital Access Crossconnect System (DACS) takes up only two-thirds of a bay, compared to the original DACS, installed in 1999, which took up five complete bays, says Don Pedersen, operations manager.



Gregg Retzer (left) compares old Internet gateway hardware with new equipment installed below, with Seth Arndorfer (left) and Don Pedersen



OUT & ABOUT

DCN co-sponsors IT conference

On May 13 Dakota Carrier Network joined forces with EFM and the Fargo CIO Exchange to produce the first North Dakota IT Symposium at the Courtyard Marriott in Moorhead, MN.

Michael Toy, CIO of First International Bank and Trust of Watford City, ND addressed the benefits and challenges the bank faced when it upgraded its network to DCN Ethernet services. There were a number of break-out sessions designed to appeal to different IT professionals.

The goal of the Symposium was to create an environment conducive to peer networking amongst IT executives, management teams and a select few vendors. This was achieved through providing peer-driven content addressing the relevant topics of today's IT leaders in our region.

The ability to receive information on opportunities and challenges facing all of IT and capturing actionable information from peers that could be applied to individual challenges, made attendance at this event rewarding and productive.

The Symposium was by invitation only and pre registration was required. Reviews on the value of the event have been positive.



"With DCN we've been able to increase our communication speed and simplify the manageability of our entire communications system. Their services are reliable and trouble-free."

Jim Sullivan
Director of Information Services

CASE STUDY:

Midwest Motor Express

Name of organization: Midwest Motor Express, Inc.

Spokesperson: Jim Sullivan, Director of Information Services

Headquarters: Bismarck, ND

Other locations: 30 service centers in 14 different states

Number of employees: 500

Year connected to DCN: 2008

Type of DCN services purchased: e-Lan Ethernet, Co-Location

How do you use your DCN connections?: We use our DCN connections for data and voice communications between our various service centers across the Upper Midwest.

DCN applications: High-speed transfer of data and voice communications using

point-to-point circuits and Ethernet.

"Our network engineering company recommended that we talk to Dakota Carrier Network about some new options, so we met with a sales representative from DCN and then some members of their technical staff. I toured the Network Operations Center and was impressed by the technology they were deploying.

Now we have switches at the NOC and they handle the routing from there. We simply plugged in the devices they provided and it worked pretty slick with no disruption to our service.

The only problem we've experienced was a construction company cutting a cable in Billings and DCN alerted us very soon after. They monitor the network 24/7 and have been extremely reliable.

Up until now, we had DSL service from several different providers; now we've consolidated services to one provider ... Dakota Carrier Network."



(If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please e-mail Nancy Bjorn Dahl at nbjorn@dakotacarrier.com)

Gaining the DCN advantage & value

Dakota Carrier Network is pleased to welcome the following new/renewing customers who are now enjoying the most contemporary network options in the country with their DCN service agreements:

NEW CUSTOMERS

Pedigree Technologies

St. Andrews Health Center

Unison Bank

RENEWING CUSTOMERS

Nexus Innovations



Tee it Up!

The eighth annual DCN Classic is set for Tuesday, July 21 at Hawktree Golf Course. Watch the mail for your invitation.

Jim Swenson: glad to be in ND

When Jim Swenson left the dairy farm near Cannon Falls, MN in the early 1980's, to attend the vocational technical school in nearby Rochester, the economy was looking quite sour. Finally landing a job at a computer store in Worthington he began his career in computer networking before working his way west.

In 1989 he began looking at career options in Sioux Falls, eventually interviewing at another computer store there. They had no immediate openings he recalls, "Instead, they offered me a chance to work at their branch in Bismarck, and I'm glad they did." He worked there installing and maintaining computer networks before finding employment in an office machine company where he was exposed to the telecommunications field. When the office machine company closed its doors in 2000, "My options were to again look toward Sioux Falls or Minnesota", Swenson recalls, "But my wife and I were hoping to stay in Bismarck."

Swenson's job search landed him a spot in the Information Technology Department for the State of North Dakota. After five years there, he became a network technician at DCN in 2005 and his fortunes continued to turn for the better.

"I interface quite a bit with our owner companies, provisioning equipment and



Jim Swenson, Network Technician designing circuits and working with other technicians on turning up the circuits," he says.

Noting that owner companies often implement the designs he creates, Swenson says it often surprises his Minnesota family members when they learn how well-connected the state of North Dakota has become.

"My relatives are saying, 'Wow, they do that in North Dakota?' and I like to tell them about our Ethernet system and the people I work with in Bismarck. They are very intelligent and great to work with. We get to work on pretty cutting edge technology because we're in a position to take advantage of the latest in developments."

Married for 25 years, with two children, Swenson and his wife show horses and he likes playing league disc golf as well as doing trick flying with kites. Lucky for him there is usually some wind to work with in ND.