

Ripley and Fletcher Ford grows business around connectivity

Powerful WiFi and faster electric vehicle service form part of strategy with Spectrum Business

Ripley and Fletcher Ford is one of New England's longest-active automotive dealerships. Located in South Paris, Maine, they have been putting motorists behind the wheel since the days of the Model T. Servicing today's driver requires new tools, including seamless WiFi and the means to transfer data quickly to onboard computers.

To make this happen, the dealership reached out to Spectrum Business.

"We had challenges because of many things, including the age of our main building, the spread-out nature of our campus and the many different technicians and mechanics we have working on the floor simultaneously," says Don Winckler, Information Technology Manager, Ripley and Fletcher Ford. "We needed more than a WiFi solution. We needed a connectivity solution."

Winckler wanted a network platform that gave him full control of the dealership's bandwidth allocations. Spectrum Business set up a system which gives him complete oversight while offering backup support whenever needed.

WiFi coverage that never stops

Ripley and Fletcher Ford's long history of serving western Maine is reflected in its sprawling physical

layout. The main building comprises three stories resting on a six-inch concrete floor heavy enough to support the construction of armored vehicles in World War II.

Over the years, the building has been remodeled to house administration offices, a showroom and a parts department. Adjacent buildings include a collision-repair facility. The total footprint is spread across a wide area, built out over many decades to serve a multitude of purposes.

Such a set-up might suggest a WiFi nightmare. Winckler disagrees: "Nightmare is a pleasant way to say it. It wasn't just the three levels, but how wide we are. We have eight service bays going one way, and then at a 90-degree angle, eight bays going another."

The dealership needed a stronger signal, boosted by multiple access points strategically located across the dealership site. It also needed a network platform that put full bandwidth control directly in Winckler's hands. They got both when they opted to install [Managed Network Edge](#).

According to Gregory Madgey, Sales Engineer, Spectrum Business: "What they had was a network that was very



Occupying the same location in South Paris, Maine, since 1909, Ripley and Fletcher Ford needed stronger internet connectivity to meet rising bandwidth demand. This was accomplished when Spectrum Business installed Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI).

Client profile



Ripley and Fletcher Ford

Company

Ripley Fletcher Ford

Industry

Retail

Services

Managed Network Edge with WiFi
Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI)
Enterprise Trunking

Overview

- Ripley and Fletcher Ford needed to upgrade its connectivity and expand WiFi coverage across a sprawling campus of older buildings in rural Maine.
- A critical WiFi need was to connect more service bays so electric vehicles (EVs) could be programmed with software updates more efficiently.
- With both severe weather and its remote location posing challenges, the dealership wanted high-speed fiber backed by a firm guarantee of uninterrupted service.

Outcomes

- To enable complete WiFi coverage in all parts of their campus, with bandwidth use fully monitored and controlled, the dealership opted for Managed Network Edge.
- Connectivity to all critical dealership operations, including sales, service and programming of EVs, is realized with Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI).
- Better voice communications are now available throughout the dealership with fiber-based Enterprise SIP Trunking.

Why it matters

- Ripley and Fletcher Ford now enjoy WiFi strong enough to keep their four core business units (sales, service, parts and accounting) using the same signal without issues.
- Connectivity can now accommodate more users and functions, including faster communication with Ford service personnel.
- Weather and isolation no longer pose issues as Spectrum Business circuits are both highly reliable and supported by service technicians located nearby.



The growing fleet of Ford electric vehicles (EVs) requires regular software updates to run efficiently. Ripley and Fletcher Ford channels bandwidth across their many service bays using WiFi from Managed Network Edge.

much manually configured, and lacking visibility. What they have now is a more complex network, yet also very intuitive and user-friendly, designed to give them full access. When they want to add more features, it is very much a plug and play situation."

"WiFi used to be our biggest problem. Once Spectrum Business came in and set us up with Managed Network Edge backed by Dedicated Fiber Internet, that gave our people the capacity and backbone to get more done."

— Don Winckler, Information Technology Manager,
Ripley and Fletcher Ford

Speeding up EV programming

WiFi has multiple uses at Ripley and Fletcher Ford, including the servicing of Ford's growing fleet of electric vehicles, or EVs.

EVs are critical to the automotive industry as sustainability initiatives dictate future success. The many computers inside each vehicle require regular software updates to run effectively. For a while, the dealership was constrained by limited WiFi from utilizing more than one specific service bay for this purpose.

"Fixing their bay situation was the impetus for all that followed," notes Edward Majkowski, Account Executive, Spectrum Business. "That's when we really got to take the hood off and have a look at how we could redesign their network."

The dealership can now utilize more bays for EV updates, and get software loaded more quickly, using the powerful WiFi and additional network bandwidth control that comes with Managed Network Edge. Switches and access points were installed at strategic locations across the entire property to ensure there are never any blind spots when it comes to network coverage.



A dealership composed of many independent but collaborative parts, Ripley and Fletcher Ford sought a technology partner to address a multitude of connectivity challenges. “We needed bandwidth to not just manage what we need to do now but give us ample capacity for continued growth,” says Don Winckler, Information Technology Manager, Ripley and Fletcher Ford. “Having Spectrum Business as our technology partner is a way to get both.”

Winckler notes that all vehicles passing through the dealership, not just EVs, require onboard computer updates when they are being serviced.

“Our technicians are responsible for getting those vehicles programmed and out the door as efficiently as possible,” he says. “That’s why we have Spectrum Business.”

Making the most of more bandwidth

To run effectively, Ripley and Fletcher Ford’s IT network must incorporate several critical functions. These include integrating its operations with a key managed services provider and with Ford’s national service department.

“Bandwidth is not an issue with Spectrum Business. What I have now is more than enough to meet my needs. I can call them up any time I need to and get more bandwidth if I need it.”

– Don Winckler, Information Technology Manager,
Ripley and Fletcher Ford

For many years, Ripley and Fletcher Ford has been a popular online retailer for automotive mechanics and enthusiasts across the nation searching to purchase rare Ford parts.

All of this, as well as day-to-day walk-in business and WiFi strong enough to support over 90 devices simultaneously, requires steady, high-speed connectivity to the internet.

Majkowski knew a new fiber circuit was needed, instantly channeling low-latency streams of data in a manner both easily scalable (to grow with the dealership’s ongoing expansion) and extremely reliable. He suggested [Dedicated Fiber Internet](#) (DFI), backed with a service-level agreement guaranteeing 100% uptime.

Winckler liked the idea. “Nobody else would give me those guarantees,” he says. He liked it even better once he began to see it in action.

“Spectrum Business has set up a network that is now expandable,” he says. “I think of it as being our backbone, a foundation for all we do now as well as what we want to do going forward.”

Another way Ripley and Fletcher Ford utilizes its technology partnership with Spectrum Business is with a revamped voice communications system which uses fiber connectivity. The dealership needed a higher-capacity, scalable voice service to keep up with growing demand across their lines of business. An [Enterprise SIP Trunking](#) solution was installed.

“The old phone system we had involved too much wiring; this really simplified our situation,” Winckler explains. “The connectivity is really well done. And the transfer of individual phone numbers by Spectrum Business technicians was flawless.”

Always there to count on

Located deep in the woods of western Maine, more than an hour’s drive from Portland, Ripley and Fletcher Ford needs service support that can reach them quickly, and in all kinds of weather. A snowstorm can leave two feet of snow one day and a sheet of ice the next.



For nearly 120 years, Ripley and Fletcher Ford has been selling and servicing all types of new and used vehicles to Maine motorists. The dealership understands the challenge of exceeding high customer expectations, and wants a technology partner who follows the same philosophy.

Winckler recalled having deep concerns about the reliability of his internet service. “The guarantees from my previous connectivity provider were weak, to say the least,” he recalls.

Majkowski assured him he can always count on Spectrum Business’s local reach, no matter the weather. Winckler reports that it has proven to be true. “I’ve seen snowstorms, rainstorms, power outages, everything, and we’ve always had connectivity,” he says. “Ed said Spectrum Business would always be there for me, and they have.”

Spectrum Business also set up fiber lines off its main circuit, so now all buildings at Ripley and Fletcher Ford access the same connectivity and bandwidth. “They have this really incredible campus-style environment,” Majkowski observes. “We knew it would be a value-add for them to create this wide, sweeping connectivity solution that not only meets their current needs but what lies in the future. So that’s what we did.”

The result has been a happier experience for all involved, as well as a technology partner Winckler is ready to count on as he tackles future challenges. “I feel like I put everything on the line when I trusted Spectrum Business,” he says. “That trust was well-deserved.”

“When you are out in the ocean, you want a life vest with you. With Spectrum Business to call on whenever there is trouble, I feel like I have one.”

– Don Winckler, Information Technology Manager,
Ripley and Fletcher Ford

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