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Best Practices in Healthcare
LIGHT DENTAL STUDIOS A group success story
Broadband Hospitality’s narrative is a bootstrapping kind of a story; one of total customer dedication and true determination to make an industry better. When Broadband launched in 1993, its founder, Vince Lucci, kept things simple—he was a one-man, one-service operation, just selling payphones to hotels. Today, the company boasts an impressive, single-source structure that offers pioneering and innovative technology solutions to the hospitality, senior living, student housing, and multi-dwelling unit (MDU) industries. How it got there is an interesting case study of how mastering the basics of organic growth, before assuming an acquisitive strategy, can be a powerful tool for long-term success.

Formerly known as Great Lakes Telcom, LTD, Broadband changed its name in 1998 to better reflect its ascent to a household name within the hospitality technology space. “As Vince developed his relationships with the hotel brands, he saw the need for additional services,”
relates Gail Gust, VP of Marketing & Business Development. “It became clear that the hotels could benefit from a single provider offering more than one service. In 2000, he installed the first ‘wired’ high-speed internet system and, within a year, had established 24/7 support help desk operations at Broadband’s home office in Youngstown, Ohio.”

But Lucci didn’t stop there. In 2009, Broadband became a DIRECTV® authorized dealer, selling and installing DIRECTV for a mix of hospitality and residential customers. Following that, the company became an AT&T Solution Provider, providing fiber, mobility, and other networking services through AT&T’s infrastructure. In 2015, they also became a Hospitality Phone Systems Provider. “By then, it was obvious that Broadband needed to take on more streamlined operations, a bigger corporate feel,” says Gust. “Vince hired Jason Yu as the COO to take over the operations, add more products and services, and grow the company to become who we are today.”

Looking ahead, Lucci opted to increase his marketing efforts in the core hospitality sector while expanding into different verticals - twin strategies he felt would give him the visibility and reach to provide fully customizable, scalable, and more cost-effective communications services to more properties. “I came on board in 2018 for marketing and business development,” confirms Gust. “Broadband had really been a ‘best-kept secret’ until then. It was clear that they were ready to leverage the strong

AT A GLANCE

BROADBAND HOSPITALITY

WHAT: A provider of multiple hospitality technology services and solutions
WHERE: Youngstown, Ohio
WEBSITE: www.broadbandhospitality.com
foundation they had built in the hospitality industry to gain more prominence with the brands, while also establishing a base in the Senior Living and MDU verticals. Through an updated website, industry media and live effects, we began to spread our message of the ‘Total Unified Technology Solution’ we bundle, install and service to our customers.”

Gust continues, “In 2019, we launched our first BBH-branded product, POTS-on Demand™, to solve yet another problem that property owners were facing.” POTS lines—an acronym which stands for Plain Old Telephone Service—are still needed in hotels or any place that requires a non-internet-based phone system for emergency services. Examples are elevators and fire panels. “This Standard Internet Protocol (SIP) appliance with 4G Cellular backup replaces the traditional ‘POTS’ copper lines,” explains Gust. “We offer a low, national fixed priced per line, compared to the rates they are currently paying for copper, and they don’t have to worry about the hassles.
This new POTS line solution is just one of the myriad ways that Broadband Hospitality has helped property owners with technology solutions that save money and keeps them ahead of the competition.

Today, the company’s suite of services includes WiFi, fiber, DIRECTV, CCTV, low voltage cabling, audio/visual services, SIP trunking, PBX, interactive TV & casting, mobile applications and digital signage. “The majority of our customers bundle services and have two or more scopes of services that we maintain and support. We customize the solution based on their needs—and provide one source of billing and support for them.”

In addition to the organic growth that Broadband was able to achieve by expanding its business to new verticals, the company also found effective paths for strategic growth opportunities, most notably its acquisition of the Fort Lauderdale-based company, All-In Interactive. “We acquired
All-In in June of this year,” reveals Gust. “Like us, they were a 25-year-old company in the industry; very well established in their niche of providing interactive services including interactive TV, digital signage, touch screen kiosks, and mobile applications that integrate with casino player and rewards programs, provide the ability for push notifications, react to geo-targeting, and offer new services such as keyless door entry and unit controls. That was a big play for us this year.”

With that acquisition, Broadband welcomed All-In’s senior management, project management and development team into the fold. “The corporate headquarters remain in Youngstown, OH, but we’ve maintained the offices in Fort Lauderdale, FL where the All-In team was based,” Gust notes. “We operate as one entity and team, now able to provide an even broader scope of services to our customers.” Broadband Hospitality continues to provide a 24/7 in-house call center with a multi-tiered support system (Levels 1, 2, and 3 service). In addition to its Youngstown,
OH and Ft. Lauderdale, FL offices, Broadband Hospitality has team members located around the country.

The marriage of the two companies has resulted in Broadband being more proactive with custom-developed solutions, moving them on from simply providing network solutions and associated services. “The All-In acquisition definitely expanded our offering,” Gust admits. “Now we’re initiating the development of custom solutions on the software side, rather than strictly providing hardware; and we’re uniquely equipped to support the rapid innovations in Internet of Things (IoT). The sky’s the limit in terms of mobile applications, focusing on being that singular provider within a mobile application - that single-source application for a community, a hotel property, or even a mixed-use, MDU community: a residential community that could utilize a mobile app for community communication, a portal for tenants and residents to pay their bills, rewards programs for different amenities that they have on the property, restaurants, and climate controls. We are equipped to integrate with hardware that can support all of these services so we can come in with a solution that does it all, under one application, as opposed to depending on appliance-controlled applications, or a separate keyless entry application.”

The all-in-one, total unified technology solution is the driving principle, philosophy, and value proposition behind Broadband’s current business strategy. “We’re very rare in the industry that we truly engineer, bundle, install, and support our solutions,” shares Gust. “Starting from the ground up, with the engineering of a new build property or conversion, and looking at everything from the low-voltage cabling that’s needed, the fiber to bring in, the networking, the WiFi, CCTV, audio/visual, the DIRECTV in rooms as well as in the commercial areas. We install it. We support it. Every installation has an assigned project management and installation team. For support, we’re able to bundle the complete
package and offer the properties a better price. They get one number to call, one bill to pay, so they aren’t managing several different vendors. That’s really an advantage for us and for the customer.”

This year, as part of their long-term outlook, Broadband will also be launching a new partner portal that will allow outside distributors to source out some of the company’s existing services. DIRECTV has hundreds of dealers across the country, for example, but many of those dealers just offer DIRECTV. The natural things that compliment HDTV satellite services—right away you think about the bandwidth, the WiFi—they can’t do it themselves. Through our partner portal, we’ll be able to fulfill those asks for them while they maintain the relationship with their customers. We’re currently launching our beta programs to introduce that portal initiative to the major distributors.”

Just named DIRECTV’s Dealer of the Year in the category of lodging and institutions, and AT&T Partner Exchange’s top provider in Network Solutions, Broadband expects to keep growing its client base by increasing its penetration in the senior living market and MDU apartments, residential, and student housing space. As always, they’ll continue to expand within their core hospitality market by maintaining their current clients and offering additional scopes. “Broadband is somewhat unique in that the spirit of the company that Vince started back in 1993 has not changed,” says Gust. “Although we completed a smaller acquisition of a telecom company in the early 2000s, followed by the more significant All-In Interactive acquisition, it’s been the same core values driving our growth, meeting the customer needs. It hasn’t been a change of companies, or a variety of non-related companies trying to merge to form this all-in-one solution. It’s really been the same company that’s provided the service and responded to the needs organically.”