Ascend

DIRECTV, Inc.

User Profile

DIRECTV® At-A-Glance

Challenge

Strengthen internal WAN for delivery of mission-critical business applications and worldwide expansion

The Ascend Solution

Provide a carrier-class, multiservice internal network that combines Frame Relay, ATM and IP technologies

Benefits

Improved performance, expanded service capabilities, increased revenue opportunities

Ascend Products

NavisCore™ network management system
B-STDX 8000/9000 multiservice switches
MAX™ 6000 WAN access switch

DIRECTV®



Headquartered in Southern California, DIRECTV launched its Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) television service in June 1994. Today the company is the industry leader with more than 3.6 million subscribers across the continental United States. To remain competitive and position itself for worldwide expansion, DIRECTV recently strengthened and streamlined its internal WAN with Ascend's NavisCore network management system and the B-STDX 8000/9000 family of multiservice switches.

ASCEND

The Ascend Solution



B-STDX 8000/9000

The B-STDX 8000 and 9000 are the first multiservice switches to offer customers a higher level of voice, SNA, video, LAN interconnectivity and Internet and intranet access services in a single, manageable platform. With the highest port density in the industry, the B-STDX 8000 and 9000 offer unsurpassed scalability and reliability.

NavisCore

NavisCore is part of the Navis™ Management Software product family. NavisCore provides multiservice IP, Frame Relay, ATM and SMDS configuration as well as management of Ascend core switches from a single platform.

Gearing Up for Growth

"DBS providers compete for more customers, more channels and better service, so the ability to grow geographically and to deliver more entertainment and information choices to subscribers are ongoing issues for us," says Anthony Lloyd, senior manager of Network Services.

A networking environment based on IDNX equipment supported DIRECTV in its first years of operation. But by early 1997 the network management team, led by Lloyd, knew the backbone infrastructure would need to be strengthened to support the company's more sophisticated business applications, such as e-mail and payroll, as well as its mission-critical programming applications.

One such application is the company's electronic on-screen program guide, which displays viewing options on the viewer's TV monitor. This information is generated at the company's El Segundo office, then sent across the WAN to sites in Colorado and New York to be broadcast to viewers via satellite.

"We needed to provide a fully redundant backbone for our broadcast facilities," Lloyd explains. "We also needed to increase connectivity. We were using an aging backbone that couldn't support Frame Relay or ATM."

Lloyd's staff evaluated offerings from several vendors before choosing the Ascend solution. "Ascend offers the best solution hands-down," he says. "It is by far the most robust and scalable, and it provides all the interfaces we require for projected expansion."

Putting the Framework in Place

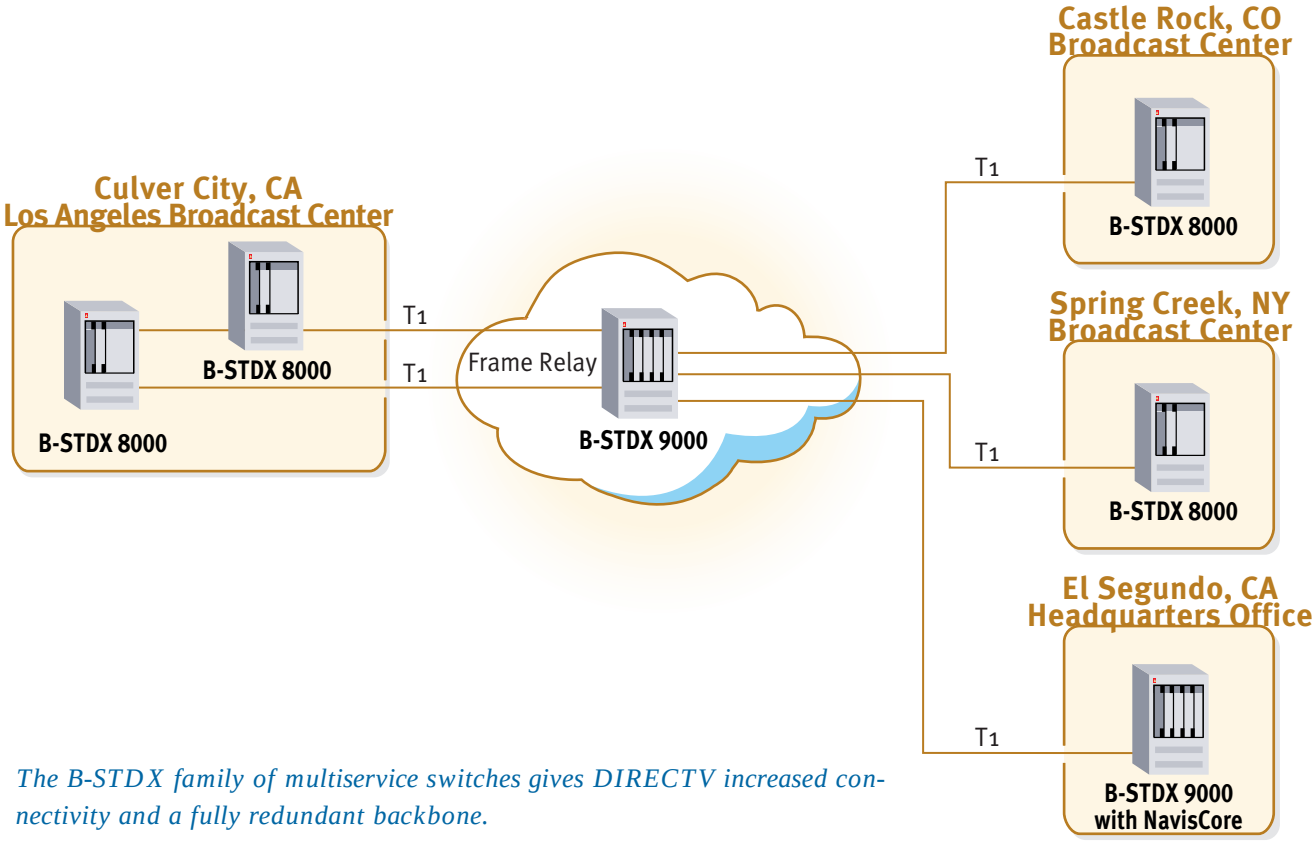
DIRECTV installed one B-STDX 9000 multiservice switch at its El Segundo headquarters office and a B-STDX 8000 multiservice switch at its Los Angeles broadcast site in Culver City. The company also installed B-STDX 8000s at broadcast sites in Colorado and New York. The switches provide connectivity for a variety of servers, including Hewlett-Packard, Windows NT, UNIX DMS and Novell. The switches build a single, unified routing domain across all services deployed in the network.

"Migrating from our old setup was easy," Lloyd says. "We just had to find the right ports for each platform and plug them in. There was absolutely no downtime during installation."

All of the switches are controlled from the El Segundo office through Ascend's NavisCore network management system, which manages and configures multiservice IP, Frame Relay, ATM and SMDS switches from a single platform.

"With NavisCore, we can perform maintenance and do upgrades from the central office, and we've reduced the number of connections across our WAN," says Lloyd. "We're already saving from $15,000 to $20,000 a month as a result of the Ascend solution, and we haven't even migrated all of our applications yet."

DIRECTV's High-Speed Private Frame Relay Network Overview



The B-STDX family of multiservice switches gives DIRECTV increased connectivity and a fully redundant backbone.

More Solutions from Ascend

DIRECTV recently deployed a remote access solution using the Ascend MAX 6000 access switch that enables more than 25,000 TV retail outlets to dial into DIRECTV headquarters and verify customer application information. DIRECTV verifies the new customer information, then issues unlocked code so the retailer can allow the customer to use the DIRECTV system.

"Ascend solutions fuel our growth by enabling us to attract more subscribers and deliver more choices to them." says Lloyd.

Company Overview

DIRECTV is the nation's leading digital television entertainment service. Since its launch in June 1994, DIRECTV has become the fastest-growing video entertainment delivery service in the world. DIRECTV, headquartered in El Segundo, California, is a unit of Hughes Electronics Corporation.

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Worldwide and North American Headquarters
One Ascend Plaza
1701 Harbor Bay Parkway
Alameda, CA 94502,
United States
Tel: 510.769.6001
Fax: 510.747.2300
E-mail: info@ascend.com
Toll Free: 800.621.9578
Fax Server: 415.688.4343
Web Site:
http://www.ascend.com

European Headquarters
Aspen House
Barley Way
Ancells Business Park
Fleet
Hampshire GU13 8UT,
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 1252.360000
Fax: +44 1252.360001

Japan Headquarters
Level 19 Shinjuku Daiichi-Seimei Bldg.
2-7-1 Nishi-Shinjuku
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-07, Japan
Tel: +81.3.5325.7397
Fax: +81.3.5325.7399
Web Site:
http://www.ascend.co.jp

Asia-Pacific Headquarters
Suite 1908
Bank of America Tower
12 Harcourt Road
Hong Kong
Tel: +852.2844.7600
Fax: +852.2810.0298

Latin, South America and the Caribbean Headquarters
One Ascend Plaza
1701 Harbor Bay Parkway
Alameda, CA 94502,
United States
Tel: 510.769.6001
Fax: 510.747.2669

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