



CASE STUDY



Customer Success Story: SureWest Communications



Where it all comes together.™

SureWest Communications Leverages VeriSign Solutions to Maintain Its Competitive Edge

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Industry

Telecommunications

Challenge

- Deliver services more cost effectively
- Improve time to market
- Comply with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act
- Implement scalable third-party infrastructure to support rapid growth rate
- Facilitate competitive differentiation of services

Solution

VeriSign® Connectivity and Interoperability Services
VeriSign® Intelligent Database Services
VeriSign® Number Portability Services
VeriSign® Billing and Payment Services
VeriSign® Advanced Solutions

Results

- SureWest Communications is now a lean, cost-competitive operation
- New services can be layered onto an existing scalable infrastructure
- SureWest Communications is able to get to market faster with new solutions
- Organization is more efficient with optimized processes and customized services that enable competitive advantage
- SureWest Communications can remain focused on regulatory compliance and core business activities like customer services

With over 90 years of experience, Sacramento, California-based SureWest Communications successfully delivers an integrated network of highly reliable advanced communications products and services to roughly 200,000 customers. The company's growth initiatives rely on a "layer-and-leverage" strategy: layering new products and services onto the legacy infrastructure and leveraging the synergies that result.

+ The VeriSign Solution

SureWest Communications has become a lean, cost-competitive operation that is able to bring new solutions to market much more quickly by leveraging VeriSign intelligent infrastructure services. Thanks to VeriSign, SureWest is able to better focus on core business activities such as customer services, and newly created capabilities can be immediately enhanced by the highly scalable VeriSign infrastructure. Today, SureWest's organization is more efficient, with optimized processes and customized offerings, enabling it to maintain its innovative edge and competitive advantage.

VeriSign® Connectivity and Interoperability Services:

- SS7 Network Infrastructure
 - VeriSign® SS7 Connectivity
 - VeriSign® ISUP Trunk Signaling
 - Cellular Switch and Transport

VeriSign® Intelligent Database Services:

- VeriSign® Toll-Free Database Service
- VeriSign® Calling Name (CNAM) Services
 - CNAM Storage
 - CNAM Delivery

VeriSign® Number Portability Services:

- VeriSign® Number Portability Data Access

VeriSign® Billing and Payment Services

VeriSign® Advanced Solutions

Maintaining a Competitive Edge

Bill DeMuth, SureWest Communications' vice president and chief technology officer, described the company's strategy: "Because of the highly competitive market here in Sacramento, we have to run as efficiently as possible, and we have found some excellent niches. It is essential to offer products that fit our market, and we best serve our customers by responding very quickly to change."



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“By leveraging the VeriSign solutions we can focus attention on delivering our core services to each customer. We can stay much more closely focused on the market direction and key players, and get to market faster with new offerings that keep us compelling to our existing subscribers and attractive to new ones.”

Bill DeMuth
Vice President and
Chief Technology Officer,
SureWest Communications

SureWest Communications likes to stay focused on its core competency, which is delivery of services to customers. It strives to deliver these capabilities more cost effectively and with better time to market than any of its competition.

As a public company, SureWest Communications has to be in compliance with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. The Act primarily focuses on establishing information transparency and accountability and, among other things, it requires that public companies doing business in the United States must certify the accuracy of financial statements filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

“What this means is that all of our information must be incorporated into standardized financial reporting processes, so it’s even more critical that the services we provide really are accurately billed and provisioned,” commented DeMuth.

SureWest’s wireless operations group was looking for customer care and billing solutions, while its wireline group needed enhanced Signaling System 7 (SS7) connectivity. “For both parts of the business,” said DeMuth, “we needed solutions that could scale to our current and anticipated volumes, and that would allow us to tangibly differentiate our services.”

Outsourcing to VeriSign Is Optimal

Since many of the back-office operations are transparent to customers, SureWest compared options for outsourcing these tasks with performing them internally. As DeMuth put it, “We have often found that outsourcing is more cost-effective and can give us better time to market. We talked to a variety of vendors and then laid out a request for proposal.”

Like most carriers, price was important to SureWest because of its impact on subscribers’ fees. “We’re a fast-growing regional carrier, so in addition to price, the fact that the VeriSign solution would scale to meet our needs and our growth made it even more attractive,” noted DeMuth. “It also offered strong back-office control and had comprehensive overall capabilities.”

Early on, SureWest validated the business case to make sure that the VeriSign solutions really would provide the services it needed, and enable the expedient delivery of new capabilities very swiftly. DeMuth recalled, “VeriSign took the time to understand our strategic roadmap, and we appreciated the ensuing detailed dialog which allowed us to fully align our plans. We worked together as a team and everything rolled out in a timely manner—taking just six months.”

Today, SureWest’s wireless business—with over 50,000 subscribers—is using VeriSign Billing and Payment Services to efficiently manage the relationship with each individual customer. Wireline operations are leveraging the VeriSign SS7 Network Infrastructure—VeriSign SS7 Connectivity and VeriSign ISUP Trunk Signaling—as well as VeriSign Intelligent Database Services—VeriSign Toll-Free Database Service and VeriSign Calling Name Services—and VeriSign Number Portability Services.



Revenues Increase in a Highly Competitive Market

DeMuth reflected, “By leveraging the VeriSign solutions we can focus attention on delivering our core services to each customer. We can stay much more closely focused on the market direction and key players, and get to market faster with new offerings that keep us compelling to our existing subscribers and attractive to new ones.”

One of the benefits of outsourcing to VeriSign is that the company has a lot of very strong customers, so SureWest can leverage that experience. When confronted with some unique aspects that need to be met with a custom approach, the VeriSign consultants execute to meet all requirements. In addition, SureWest’s day-to-day support experiences with VeriSign have been very good. “We have solid, open dialog, and a single point of contact that is familiar with our environment so we don’t have to start from scratch with each interaction,” said DeMuth.

The biggest impact of the VeriSign solutions on SureWest’s business is the facilitation of adding new services swiftly as market needs change. “It really helps us with top-line growth,” observed DeMuth. “We continue to improve our revenues—even though we’re under intense price pressure—and in line with our layer-and-leverage strategy, we’ve been able to layer on new services and keep our average revenue per customer steady or increasing.”

SureWest has worked hard to make its organization more efficient. Offloading non-customer-facing activities to VeriSign has enabled the optimization of many key processes. “We are now a lean, cost-competitive operation that can always offer the latest and greatest services,” noted DeMuth. “We have a lot of competing business needs and by being able to outsource select functions to VeriSign we have been able to reallocate internal resources to concentrate on core business objectives.”

For over 90 years, SureWest has prided itself on delivering quality customer services. DeMuth stated, “We look to our partners to provide us with the same levels of care, and quality and strength of solutions as we deliver to our own customers. VeriSign has proven to be an excellent partner: It’s easily able to scale with our business and is aligned with our vision.”

He concluded, “VeriSign’s position of market leadership yields some very insightful perspectives on the dynamics of our own marketplace, and it has been very good about sharing these viewpoints, which helps us maintain our competitive advantage. Our relationship is a win-win: If we’re successful then they are successful.”

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