



## *The cable guy shows up sooner, thanks to IBM software*

Popcorn and soft drink in hand, you settle onto the sofa to watch your favorite TV show when suddenly the cable goes out. A line problem, defective converter box, or some other mysterious malfunction has wiped out the picture. Whatever the cause, you want service restored—and you want it before you miss another scene!

Time Warner Cable in Raleigh, NC knows that such interruptions—though they occur only occasionally for its 80 thousand customers—require quick responses. But an old system in which Time Warner Cable service crews communicated over a single radio frequency was anything but quick. Voice traffic between dispatchers and the approximately 40 mobile repair units typically jammed the frequency. The result: delays as long as 20 minutes as service technicians tried to get through to dispatchers for work orders, customer data, and other critical information. All that down time meant longer waits for already-anxious customers.

*“It was pretty apparent that we needed a better way of getting information to our people in the field so we could do a better job for our customers.”*

*Bob Hermann, plant manager of Time Warner Cable, Raleigh*

What Time Warner chose is an integrated offering from IBM that allows repair crews to use eNetwork Wireless Software and ThinkPad portable computers to keep in touch with the main office anytime, anywhere. The combination of eNetwork Wireless Software and ThinkPad computers with special modems—wallet-size black boxes, each with a small antenna, attached to the top of the screen—allows technicians to

---

<b>Application</b>	Mobile wireless voice and data communication
--------------------	--

---

<b>Software</b>	IBM® eNetwork™ Wireless
-----------------	-------------------------

---

<b>Hardware</b>	IBM AS/400® IBM ThinkPad®
-----------------	------------------------------

---



access crucial information from the cable company's existing AS/400 databases in real time. The resulting gains in performance and productivity are so dramatic that Time Warner Cable is deploying the system in three other North Carolina cities: Charlotte, Cary, and Durham.

The Raleigh-based service technicians used to start their day by driving to the cable company offices in their own vehicles to pick up work orders and maps. They'd hop into their service trucks and typically arrive at their first customer call between 8:30 and 9 a.m. Because the IBM system capabilities enable them to obtain the same work information remotely, technicians now keep their service trucks at home and go straight to customers' homes by 8 a.m.

A similar productivity boost occurs at the end of the day. It's no longer necessary to return to the office to turn in paperwork and park the service trucks, so crew members have extra time to help customers.

The IBM system has produced huge, measurable benefits for Time Warner Cable and its customers:

- A company analysis found that a sample group of 12 technicians completed 2721 more service calls between December 1997 and February 1998 than in the same period a year earlier, when the IBM system was not yet in use.
- Each technician on average resolved 14.5 service calls per day after the IBM system was put in place, compared with just 11 before—a 32 percent increase. "It's not necessarily that technicians are working harder; there just isn't as much wasted time," Hermann said.
- In 1996, Time Warner Cable met its goal of responding to every service call by the end of the next day in 88 percent of cases. In 1997, with the IBM system only partially rolled out, the rate improved to 92 percent. This was accomplished without increasing personnel and despite

a slight increase in the number of calls. Hermann estimated that the rate today is around 95 percent.

- Time Warner Cable, which schedules service calls in two-hour windows, has improved its on-time record. That not only pleases customers but saves the company the \$20 (U.S.) service fee discount it provides when a repairman is late.
- Technicians no longer have to carry bulky maps in their trucks because maps of the entire service area and its cable lines are stored in a ThinkPad computer and recalled for viewing on a resident browser. This cuts the annual cost of map updates by at least \$200 (U.S.) per vehicle.

Time Warner Cable had examined several alternatives, including a digital radio network, to reengineer its communication system but found the IBM products just right for its needs. IBM eNetwork Wireless Software supports the leading international cellular, wireline, and wireless packet data networks, including one in the last category that the cable operator liked. Also, the IBM software is specifically designed to extend AS/400 5250 applications (as well as IP, 3270, or Web-based applications in the LAN, WAN, intranet, or Internet) to mobile workers.

Ryan Hussey, an assistant plant manager at Time Warner Cable, said on-site training conducted by IBM familiarized service employees with the new system. It helped because IBM eNetwork Wireless Software allows applications to work with familiar screens and commands, the same as those used in the office.

*"Most of our people have grabbed this with both hands and run with it."*

*Ryan Hussey, assistant plant manager,  
Time Warner Cable, Raleigh*

The system has been so successful that some Time Warner Cable sales representatives in Raleigh are now using it, and maintenance crews—who service cable company infrastructure while technicians respond to customer calls—might do so soon. It's even possible that the company's contract cable installers will join in one day. Said Hermann: "This is truly a remarkable project that will continue to benefit our organization for years to come."

#### For more information

If you would like more information about eNetwork Wireless Software, visit us on the Internet at: [www.software.ibm.com/enetwork/mobile/](http://www.software.ibm.com/enetwork/mobile/) or send e-mail to: [mobile@us.ibm.com](mailto:mobile@us.ibm.com)

For sales support in the United States, call 1 888 695 7654; in other countries, call +1 914 766 8799.

For service support through the Mobile and Wireless Competency Center in the United States, call 1 800 950 7083.



© International Business Machines Corporation 1998

Research Triangle Park, NC  
USA

06-98  
All rights reserved

IBM, AS/400, eNetwork, and ThinkPad are trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.

Other company, product, and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others.



Printed in the United States of America on recycled paper containing 10% recovered post-consumer fiber



For Position Only

G325-3812-00