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Electronic Communication Services Making the Connection



Telecommunications is one of the most important technology investments a company can make.

With the right services, a manufacturing operation in Meadville can save hundreds of dollars each month in long-distance charges on calls to a branch office in Erie.

A sales rep can quickly and effectively access customer accounts, sales reports and purchasing data via a wireless data networking system.

A busy office manager can access e-mail over the phone and receive faxes as e-mails, saving time and reducing unnecessary equipment costs.

A CEO with customers all over the country can virtually be in two places at once with a state-of-the-art conferencing system.

"We see much of our customer base as business people who have needs beyond simple communications," says Electronic Communication Services Inc. (ECS) co-owner and General Manager Dale Sherman. "There are so many applications now that tie in with the telephone system."

Established February 1, 1989, Electronic Communication Services, headquartered at 10464 Route 6N in Albion, Pennsylvania and centrally located off Interstates 79 and 90, has been finding new ways to provide communication solutions in the form of phone systems and services. Once primarily serving the needs of the lodging industry, the company, which today

occupies a 6,000 square-foot office and warehousing facility, with nine employees and sizeable fleet of service vehicles, is now a major provider of business and commercial telecommunications systems and services in the tri-state area. ECS has done this by combining business telephone systems with IP telephony, voicemail systems and high-speed data solutions, plus a full staff of well-trained, highly skilled technicians. "Our motto is, 'it's all about the customer,'" says co-owner Matthew Onderko Jr., who manages the company's technical direction and development. "What we've built is truly a customer service-oriented business."

ECS was founded by Onderko, Sherman and partner John Walker, after working together for years for a large electronics conglomerate. At that time, Sherman was a branch manager, and Onderko and Walker worked as technicians.

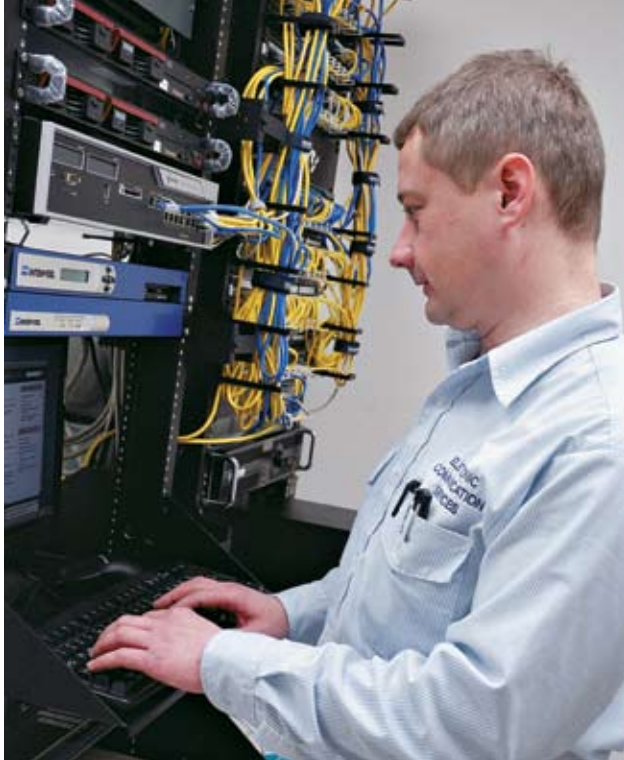
When that company was bought out by another large corporation, with a new direction and less interest in handling telecommunications, the three, at Onderko's urging, decided to start their own venture — mostly subcontracting work for their former employer.

Just as other high profile technology ventures start out of a garage or basement, so too did ECS. Operations were housed in Onderko's Meadville home for the first eight months of operation, then with a growing client base, the company relocated to their current location.

Electronic Communication Services' knowledgeable and highly skilled technicians are ready to assist with any telecommunications or data networking needs. Technicians are also available for 24/7 emergency support and remote maintenance.



Making the Connection



The Erie County-based company provides design, installation and maintenance of data networks.

As it turned out, ECS was well on its way to becoming a major provider of phone systems and services for the lodging industry, selling, installing and upgrading products for such major hoteliers as the Bel-Aire Hotel and Scott Enterprises. Eventually over the next 11 years, an estimated 80 to 90 percent of ECS customers were hotels and motels — all of which dramatically changed after September 11, 2001.

“9/11 was a major hit for us and the lodging industry, because hotel occupancy dropped so rapidly,” says Sherman. “That’s when we made a decision to diversify or expand our services to local businesses.”

With a broader client base, ECS now estimates 60 to 70 percent of their customers are hotels and motels, but a growing 30 to 40 percent are industrial, commercial, educational and municipal markets. Among those major clients are the Erie City Water Authority, Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority, C.A. Curtze Company, and Amthor Steel, as well as Triangle Suspension in DuBois, to name a few.

“We still have our lodging customers,” notes Sherman, “we’re just more business-oriented now.”

For many businesses, telecommunications is the highest or second highest cost in their overall operating budgets. Choose the wrong provider with the wrong solutions and the results can limit and restrict a company’s day-to-day and long-term operations; choose the right provider with the right solutions and a business can reap the rewards of lower costs, maximum efficiency and improved customer relationships.

For instance, ECS’ IP telephony solutions enable voice communication over Internet Protocol (VoIP) networks, or the ability to make phone calls using a broadband Internet connection instead of regular (analog) phone

lines. The service promises cost savings by combining voice and data on one network that can be centrally maintained, as well as by eliminating toll expenses for calls between locations.

The company’s reliable and feature-rich product lines include Mitel Networks and Inter-tel. Mitel products are commonly used for large applications, such as hotels or school districts. Inter-tel products are mostly used for smaller to medium-sized applications including those with advanced needs, such as business centers and call centers.

According to ECS, both product lines offer innovative features and functions such as conferencing, return calling using caller I.D., record-a-call and overflow recordings. Features also include group call pickup, group listen, call forwarding, centralized voicemail, full duplex speakerphone, speed dialing and automated call distribution.

The reason ECS has chosen Mitel and Inter-tel for their product lines is because both manufacturers believe telephone systems should be able to grow with you, either in size or technology, via software upgrades and not by replacing equipment. As Sherman notes: “We have systems out there that have been in service since 1978 and have been upgraded to the most current technology without replacing the equipment we originally installed.”

ECS further distinguishes itself in that sales, setup, training and service are provided by ECS alone, not an outside partner. Basically, customers have a single contact for all their telecommunications and data networking needs.

“We have the expertise, in house, to design, install, and maintain voice and data networks, without utilizing a third party for data networking requirements, like many other companies do,” explains Onderko. “We maintain the networks, the communication site. If our technician goes to a site and can’t troubleshoot, and must wait for another party to come in, that’s unacceptable. We don’t believe our customers should have to wait.”

ECS strives to have a thorough understanding of its client’s business, applications and processes, and how they can be modified to maximize their return on investment. The company’s goal is to design, implement and support effective long-term telecommunication systems and solutions. ▸

Courteous and experienced professionals deliver first-class customer service.





ECS is always looking to provide the most up-to-date technology available today.

"If a customer has a receptionist at every location, you can centralize with voice over IP," Sherman says. "The customer that is calling has no idea that their call is being handled in Erie or Meadville. We take a good look at long-distance calls between offices and whether the current connections are fulfilling your data requirements with enough bandwidth." Customers gain maximum value from ECS technicians, who are Microsoft- and network-certified and have undergone extensive technical training. An added bonus is the company's onsite training center, where customers can test the latest equipment.

ECS also boasts a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week support service, where remote maintenance can quickly address an issue when problems arise. The company prides itself in finding solutions and assisting customers through times of transition, emergency and other unexpected occurrences. For example, "One time a customer in Ridgway called us on a Saturday afternoon, telling us their building had flooded," notes Sherman. "We had them online by Monday afternoon and the system had been completely under water."

Today, ECS continues to deliver state-of-the-art, cost-efficient solutions while strengthening its communications infrastructure. The company, the owners say, is always looking for new technology, new products to deliver reliable service.

"The most important thing about our employees," adds Onderko, "is they care about the customer."

It's certainly a service ECS clients can connect with. ★

For more information about Electronic Communication Services, visit www.ecscommunication.com.



Getting Connected...

- ECS was formed in 1989 by three former coworkers Matthew Onderko Jr., Dale Sherman and John Walker.
- The company is a major provider of telecommunications equipment and data networks for a variety of customers, including hotels and motels, manufacturing facilities, schools, an array of vendors and government agencies.
- ECS has nine employees and occupies a 6,000-square-foot headquarters centrally located off Interstates 79 and 90.
- Customers are located up and down the East Coast with a focus on the tri-state area.
- ECS is a member of the Manufacturers' Association of Northwestern Pennsylvania, Chambers of Commerce in Albion, Corry, Erie, Meadville, and Titusville, the Technology Council of NW PA and the Erie Technology Management Association.
- ECS is rated in the top 98 percent for "customer satisfaction" in an independent survey performed annually by Mitel.



A dedicated team of employees is the hallmark of ECS.