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## case study

### **Ben Lomand Rural Telephone Corporative Achieves Reliability, Efficiency and Peace of Mind Through 15-Year Partnership with KgW & Company**

Founded in 1954, Ben Lomand Telephone has grown to become one of the largest and most successful rural telephone cooperatives in the nation, serving approximately 46,000 customers across Tennessee with local, long-distance, DSL and video services. Over the past 15 years, IBM Premier Business Partner KgW & Company has provided the company's IT infrastructure support. With KgW's help and execution, Ben Lomand has solved a myriad of business issues ranging from server performance to contract consolidation. Whether re-configuring servers or reducing lengthy backups, KgW's long-lasting partnership has enabled Ben Lomand to achieve results well worth "communicating:" reliable, high-performance systems; increased employee efficiency; reduced costs; and perhaps most importantly — peace of mind.

#### ***Server Support for Mission-Critical Billing***

Like most communications companies, Ben Lomand's billing system is considered essential to its success. At Ben Lomand, this mission-critical application runs on a powerful IBM iSeries® server, but nearly 15 years ago, performance concerns brought KgW into the account. At the time, Ben Lomand was struggling with response times and reliability.

"The IBM iSeries is an extremely reliable, high-performance server, but previous system configurations had not positioned the company for performance in the face of rapid growth," said Ken Way, president for KgW & Company. "Because our focus and expertise is in hardware technology, we are able to design configurations that make sense for both a company's current and anticipated business requirements. Our designs provide solutions to minimize problems and concerns."

After demonstrating its knowledge and understanding of the server, KgW won the hardware business in 1994. The KgW team has been updating and configuring the iSeries server to support Ben Lomand's billing applications ever since, obtaining the hardware through value-added distributor, Arrow ECS. Throughout the years, reliability, support and performance have been impeccable.

"KgW's iSeries expertise and commitment to our success enable me to sleep soundly at night," said Chris Centracchio, information systems manager for Ben Lomand. "The negative impact to our business if the billing system were to experience sub-par performance, or even worse, an outage, is significant both in terms of revenue and efficiency. Our current software system not only manages billing, but also order management, provisioning and customer care. If the server is down, we can no longer bill customers nor can we automatically provision services such as calling features and video. Downtime threatens customer service, employee productivity, and ultimately our revenue stream. Fortunately, with KgW on board, I can rest easy."

Centracchio also appreciates KgW's attention to detail and honesty. "Rather than just recommending that we add another processor to improve performance when disk capacity is taxed, KgW always examines the system and attempts to re-claim space before suggesting a purchase. If a new processor is required, they always justify it."

### ***Expanding the Partnership, Ensuring Success***

With initial success in iSeries server design and troubleshooting, Ben Lomand began relying on KgW & Company for other technology projects as well.

"Our goal is always to help our customers achieve the best possible performance for the lowest possible cost," said Way. "When we first came on board, Ben Lomand's IT director asked us to help the company get a handle on all of its technology assets. We quickly noticed the customer had numerous maintenance contracts with IBM so we helped consolidate those contracts at a significant price savings. The consolidation and introduction of extended contracts afforded Ben Lomand price protection while simplifying their inventory management and reconciliation."

Additional projects have included moving the company's printers from remote twinax controllers to the Ethernet, increasing flexibility of use and enabling the company to remove a secondary network in its T1 lines. "The old printing network consumed a sizable amount of closet space, so moving printers to the IP network has freed that real-estate for more valuable IT equipment," noted Centracchio.

KgW also helped Ben Lomand make the important decision to handle its bill printing in-house.

"A few years ago, the company was ready to outsource its printing to reduce costs," said Terry Paone, senior solutions architect for KgW & Company. "We were able to present an alternative in the IBM InfoPrint 70 solution, which not only ended up saving the company money, but it also salvaged three local jobs from outsourcing – a job each at Ben Lomand, the local post office and the local paper distributor." Today, KgW manages the InfoPrint 70's contractual service with IBM, freeing Ben Lomand and Centracchio to focus on other business-critical tasks.

One of KgW's most recent projects involved replacing Ben Lomand's back-up solution. The legacy tool was a manual tape-based solution that required frequent intervention.

"It was not uncommon for backups to consume the entire night if they completed at all," said Centracchio. "We'd often arrive in the morning to find that the tape had run out and have to cancel the backup to avoid impacting application performance during the work day."

To solve the problem, KgW implemented a disk-to-disk-to-tape solution that automates the entire backup process. "Our backups now complete in approximately 30 minutes, a fraction of our previous 12-hour average, and restores are much simpler as well," said Centracchio. "It's literally night and day from how we were operating before."

Ultimately, Centracchio knows he can count on KgW & Company for whatever technology challenges come his way. "We have go-to expert resources in the professionals at KgW that we trust to approach each problem with professionalism, technical expertise and integrity. Our 15-year partnership is a testament not only to the company's technical prowess, but also to its character and commitment to helping customers succeed."

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For more information about Ben Lomand Rural Telephone Corporative, please visit [www.blomand.net](http://www.blomand.net)  
For more information about KgW & Company, please visit [www.kgwco.com](http://www.kgwco.com)  
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