



The Boise Police Department Builds a Better Network for Less

Cradlepoint Enables In-Vehicle Connectivity for Officers to Protect & Serve

SUMMARY

The network technology inside Boise Police Department's cruiser fleet was outdated, expensive, and difficult to maintain. Eugene Smith, Deputy Chief of Operations, had a forward-thinking vision to upgrade the network to enable officers to spend more time patrolling, adapt to evolving technology, and reduce the amount of IT resources needed to maintain the network – all in the face of an unmoving budget. Working with the City of Boise's Information Technology department, Deputy Chief Smith implemented a solution combination of Cradlepoint wireless routing devices and Enterprise Cloud Manager to provide a stable, flexible, and easily maintained network while reducing both capital expenditures and operating expenses.

SOLUTION:

COR SERIES, ENTERPRISE CLOUD MANAGER

APPLICATION:

PROVIDE MOBILE 4G LTE NETWORK CONNECTIVITY TO POLICE CARS; ENABLE CENTRAL CONFIGURATION, MONITORING, AND MANAGEMENT OF IN-VEHICLE NETWORK DEVICES

MARKET:

PUBLIC SECTOR, LAW ENFORCEMENT

CUSTOMER PROFILE

With a growing population of more than 200,000, Boise, Idaho is frequently recognized for its education, environment, workforce, and business-friendly environment. The City Information Technology department helps maintain Boise's positive reputation by providing top-notch information and technology services to all its agencies. The department works with these internal customers in strategic partnerships to drive the centralized delivery of technology services across Boise.



BUSINESS NEEDS

Like many public sector organizations, the City of Boise is continually seeking ways to do more with less. Recently, the IT department needed to help the police department provide more services without hiring more officers, deliver more technology services without hiring more IT staff, and work closely with other departments and regional emergency service providers without making budget-busting investments in new technology. Deputy Chief Smith determined the City should replace its aging and clunky police in-vehicle network connectivity solution, which depended on aircards the officers had to plug (and unplug) into the back of their in-vehicle laptop computers.

SOLUTION

After an 18-month search for the best technology to meet the police department's needs, Deputy Chief Smith and the IT department selected Cradlepoint as its technology partner and began installing Cradlepoint COR Series devices in its 150-vehicle fleet. It also implemented Enterprise Cloud Manager, Cradlepoint's network management and application platform, to enable central configuration, monitoring, and management of the Cradlepoint devices. Along with the Cradlepoint devices, the police department replaced its large mounted computers with tablets on retractable mounts to save space and enhance cabin safety for its officers.

"WE NEEDED TO LOWER OUR COSTS AND WERE LOOKING FOR THE BEST SOLUTION FOR OUR OFFICERS. SOMETIMES YOU FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES AND SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO MAKE THEM," DEPUTY CHIEF EUGENE SMITH SAID. "I WOULD NEVER PUT OUR OFFICERS BACK IN THAT OLD CAR. THERE WAS TOO MUCH TECH, IT REDUCED DRIVING AREA, AND TOOK UP TOO MUCH ROOM."

BENEFITS

COST SAVINGS

Cradlepoint has helped the IT department realize significant cost savings in a number of ways. Its always-on connectivity lets officers stay in the field for more hours every day. Enterprise Cloud Manager shrinks the time and resources needed to conduct fleet-wide software upgrades and enabled IT to deliver more cost-effective services to the police department.

EFFICIENT USE OF OFFICER RESOURCES

Garry Beaty, Chief Information Officer for the City of Boise, wanted to help the police department deliver more services by giving officers network access to information while in their cars.

“Given our budgetary constraints, we had to optimize our officers’ use of their time. Giving them dependable network connectivity meant that they no longer had to drive back and forth across town to headquarters to file their reports. That’s a big win for us in terms of available hours on patrol,” said Beaty.

This efficiency also paid off for the City in terms of incident response. With officers able to spend more time in the neighborhoods, emergency responses times are faster.

RELIABILITY

The police department’s previous network connectivity solution depended on modems that were plugged into the back of each vehicle’s laptop. Sharon Jensen, the IT department’s Manager of Planning and Analysis, said keeping track of and replacing broken or missing modems consumed an inordinate amount of IT staff time.

“WITH OFFICERS SECURELY CONNECTED TO THE NETWORK, WE’RE ABLE TO KEEP THEM SCATTERED OUT ACROSS THE CITY WHERE THEY SHOULD BE. IF THERE’S AN EMERGENCY SITUATION, THERE IS MORE CHANCE THAT AN OFFICER WILL BE CLOSE BY TO RESPOND.”

“Cradlepoint saves so much time for IT and so much frustration for the officers. Before, it wasn’t unusual for an officer to climb in their cruiser only to find that the modem was missing or broken. They would literally have to get out of the cruiser and either find another modem or find another car. With a Cradlepoint router secured in each trunk, officers know that when they get into their cruiser, they will be connected – end of story,” said Jensen.

CENTRAL NETWORK MANAGEMENT

In the past, when IT needed to update software, provide bug fixes, or install virus patches, its staff had to touch each of the police department’s 150-plus cruisers. Rhonda Saucedo, an IT department Project Coordinator, calculates that a given round of updates took as many as 160 man-hours.

Saucedo said, “We would get all hands on deck. We even borrowed people from our infrastructure team to get it done as quickly as possible. With Enterprise Cloud Manager, it takes us about five minutes to load the update, press a button, and update the entire fleet.”

NETWORK FLEXIBILITY

Deputy Chief Smith said that by being smarter about its network solution, IT is nimble enough now to change as network technology evolves.

“Because of our inability to move quickly with technology, we used to end up with four or five different types of computers across the fleet. The IT department was responsible for maintaining them all, which led to a lot of duplication of effort and constant touching of the machines.”

With the Cradlepoint solution, IT was able to afford to replace all the computers at once and upgrade them all to one wireless router solution. That dramatically reduces maintenance time and gives IT the freedom to make fleet-wide hardware changes.

MOBILE HOTSPOT

With the department’s previous solution, the ability of multiple officers to converge onto an incident scene and access the network depended on unreliable and inconvenient plug-in modems. That solution no longer fits the needs of modern policing.

“Even if an officer or detective arriving at an incident without one of the equipped patrol cruisers has to park blocks away, he or she can still access the secure police network by using the hotspot of a cruiser at the scene. Officers can also give other first responders access to the network if needed,” said Saucedo.

ROOM TO GROW

The City of Boise has many new plans for using Cradlepoint to further improve police dispatching, officer safety, and cross-functionality between other City entities.

“Our overall goal,” says CIO Beaty, *“is to create a mobile-office environment for everyone out in the field. We want our police officers, firefighters, paramedics, code enforcement officers, inspectors – anyone working in the field – to have all the information technology they need to work together to get the most out of our tax dollars. Cradlepoint’s wireless technology is helping us get there.”*

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