

# Cisco High-Touch Services Elevate Customer Satisfaction

White Paper



In response to a drop in customer satisfaction levels for technical and advanced services, Cisco established a set of initiatives. One of these was the Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) High-Touch Operations Manager (HTOM) initiative. An HTOM acts as a liaison between the customer and Cisco to facilitate resolution of any issues that might arise, with a focus on networkwide issues that might disrupt a mission-critical network. Surveys showed that customers with an HTOM were more satisfied with the services they received from Cisco. By offering an HTOM on a try-before-you-buy basis, Cisco hoped to raise CSAT levels and grow relationships with customers.

Among the 10 customers that participated in the CSAT HTOM initiative were BendBroadband and an independent telco.

BendBroadband has served Central Oregon since 1955. The company offers an extensive range of broadband, cable, and telephone services for commercial and residential customers. Facilities include more than a thousand miles of fiber and coax infrastructure along with metropolitan optical Ethernet, T-1/PRI, and hosted private branch exchange (PBX) services. It operates one of the fastest wireless broadband networks in the nation and was among the first to be 100 percent digital. BendBroadband recently upgraded its Cisco® cable modem termination system (CMTS) and also has a large Cisco wireless deployment. "We consider Cisco our primary provider," says Sam Fox, network operations center (NOC) engineer with Bend.

Another organization, an independent telco, owns and operates local telephone companies in a handful of Eastern U.S. states. It is among the 20 largest cable operators in the nation, delivering video, high-speed Internet, and telephone service over a state-of-the-art broadband network. "Our backbone is exclusively Cisco routing and switching. Cisco is our most important vendor," says the manager of network operations.

"Having an HTOM as a single point of contact is important to us. That ability to get assistance any time we need it is very valuable."

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**Manager of Network Operations**  
Independent Telco

## Critical Business Issues

In addition to residential service, BendBroadband provides a full array of communications services to businesses in the region, including Internet, fiber connectivity, and telephone. These services are mission critical for organizations large and small. Disruptions can affect not only overall profitability, but also health and safety for healthcare and municipal entities served by BendBroadband.

Subscriber expectations for the independent telco's wireline and cable services are very high as well. The cable network supports more than 300,000 subscribers, including more than 200,000 high-speed Internet users and more than 130,000 telephony customers. Many of these are triple-play subscribers. The network must be always on, always available. Outages are not tolerated.

## What BendBroadband and the Independent Telco Needed

BendBroadband thrives on innovation and new technology. "We tend to be innovators," says Fox. "We have a number of products in our network where we've been the first to implement them in North America. Our CEO is very forward leaning."

All this innovation comes with a price. Testing and supporting newer network devices require incrementally more resources. "There are just three of us on the team, and we have a very large network," says Fox. Making sure that service requests submitted to the Cisco Technical Assistance Center (TAC) are resolved as quickly as possible is a top priority.

The independent telco has followed a more traditional path with longer network upgrade lifecycles. It too, however, depends on a small staff to handle network issues. What BendBroadband and the independent telco were both looking for was a higher level of attention and support from Cisco to help resolve incidents more quickly and efficiently.

## What Cisco Implemented

When Cisco extended an offer of an HTOM for a trial period under the CSAT HTOM initiative, BendBroadband eagerly accepted. A dedicated HTOM monitors an organization's technical support needs, keeps track of open service requests, and resolves process issues quickly and effectively.

The independent telco also accepted the offer from Cisco for an HTOM. "He is our single point of contact for all service-related issues," says the manager of network operations.

The HTOM service is customized for each Cisco customer to meet that customer's specific needs. For example, BendBroadband was concerned that a weekly meeting to discuss service request status would eat up too much of the small IT staff's time. The HTOM scheduled the meeting for every other week and distributes a report by email in off weeks.

In general, the list of services provided by HTOMs includes:

- Service request escalation management
- Periodic conference call and status update
- Quarterly operations data analysis
- Standard reporting on operations

## Results for BendBroadband and the Independent Telco

### Faster Issue Resolution

The HTOM assigned to BendBroadband has helped reduce resolution times for issues affecting the service provider's network. In just one example, a Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance at a retirement facility began reloading every 10 minutes because of a Cisco IOS® Software bug, bringing

down the subscriber's computer system. Unfortunately, the device wasn't covered on a support contract. "We contacted Erez Halfon, our HTOM, and he got a TAC engineer on the line, and we had the problem fixed in 15 minutes," says Fox.

The independent telco's manager of network operations has also turned to his HTOM for expedited resolution of issues. For example, a critical network device had to be replaced. Going through the normal TAC process and waiting for a ticket to be assigned would take hours and eliminate any hope of getting the part shipped for a planned maintenance window that night. The network operations manager escalated the issue through his HTOM and was able to get the part delivered that night, avoiding a potential outage affecting video customers. "That one instance sold me on the concept of an HTOM. If it happens once or twice a year, the service is worth it to me."

### Higher Network Availability

Maximizing network availability can be achieved by responding to issues and minimizing resolution times. Availability can also be increased by proactively preparing for issues. BendBroadband deploys a fair amount of new equipment on a regular basis. "We try doing things other people haven't done," says Fox. "Often we don't have a lot of time to test before we implement. Through our HTOM we can set up a preemptive service request and have a TAC engineer standing by during our planned maintenance window. If we find a bug, we can resolve it more quickly."

### Higher Staff Productivity

The smaller an IT staff is, the more productive its members must be to keep up with planned and unplanned maintenance activities. An HTOM can offload some tasks that might otherwise fall to the bottom of the to-do list. For example, the independent telco's HTOM prepares equipment end-of-life reports that can help staff better plan for upgrades and new technology. "It also strengthens my case with management having Cisco recommend replacement," says the manager of network operations.

## Summary

The CSAT HTOM initiative not only achieved its goal of reversing low satisfaction, but also repaired relationships by working as a team to support the customer. “Having our HTOM has been a big improvement, a big help, and probably a model we should have been deploying a long time ago,” says the independent telco’s network operations manager. “It’s made our lives easier.”

BendBroadband’s Fox agrees. “Our HTOM has made a big difference in how we approach getting assistance from the TAC.”

## Products and Services

- Cisco High-Touch Operations Management Service



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