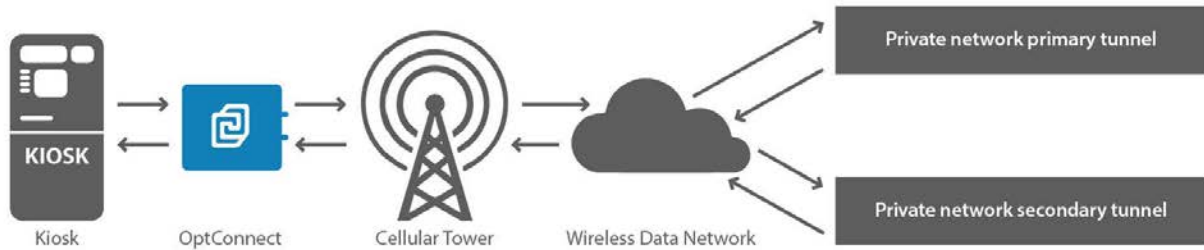


Vending Technology News



Micro Market Success: Kwik Kafe Secures A Reliable Connection For A Remote Location

By Elliot Maras

Kwik Kafe Co. Inc., a Bluefield, Va.-based vending and refreshment services provider, faced a challenge when a customer in a remote area wanted a micro market: reliable, affordable Internet connectivity. The longtime customer wanted to provide its employees a micro market so they could enjoy the increased product variety that a micro market can offer. Kwik Kafe realized right away they needed to provide a reliable, secure Internet connection to authorize card purchases and support a video surveillance camera.

The customer was located in an area that does not have landlines. The only way to have Internet access is to have a point-to-point satellite service, which is expensive. More importantly, such service is not always reliable, which could present a major customer relations problem for a micro market.

“When our customer first told us that we would have to find our own way to get Internet, I was pretty freaked out, especially with there being no landline Internet services at all in that area,” says D.J. Champion, Kwik Kafe’s systems administrator.

During last October’s Atlantic Coast Expo (ACE) in Myrtle Beach, S.C., Champion came across OptConnect, a company that specializes in wireless network solutions for micro markets. OptConnect provides a 3G/4G LTE wireless gateway offering the same reliability as landlines, but at a lower cost. OptConnect’s end-to-end managed service includes hardware, network connectivity from major carriers, web-based management software, alerts, analytics, and more.

At the ACE show, Champion met John Hickey, owner of Tech2Success, a New York, N.Y.-based reseller of OptConnect solutions. Champion contacted Hickey after the show and explained that

he wanted to install a Three Square Market micro market at a customer location, but he was having telemetry reliability issues. The micro market has a card payment terminal to authorize credit and debit card purchases.

Hickey was familiar with the Three Square Market and he was able to configure a router that would ensure a reliable cellular signal for Kwik Kafe's customer location.

Hickey determined that Verizon would be the best telemetry provider based on the proximity of the Verizon towers to the Kwik Kafe customer. OptConnect sent Campion a router to connect to both the kiosk and the DVR surveillance camera Kwik Kafe has at the location. Both devices are powered by the same cellular signal.

"We made sure the OptConnect was configured appropriately to the Three Square Market," Hickey says.

Without the OptConnect, Kwik Kafe would have had to install a point-to-point satellite network which isn't reliable that would have cost in excess of \$400 a month.

After successfully installing the kiosk in November, Kwik Kafe installed a second micro market at another one of the account's locations the following month. "It's worked pretty good," Campion says. "We have been making more in sales since we put the micro market in."

Kwik Kafe is able to use Three Square Market's software to monitor sales reports at any time using the Verizon connection, using a desktop, a smart phone or a tablet.

Three Square Market has a phone app that allows a location's customers to make purchases using the app on their own smartphones.

With a pair of successful micro market installations, Kwik Kafe hopes to add more micro markets.

Kwik Kafe serves Southwest Virginia, Northeast Tennessee, Southern West Virginia and Southeastern Kentucky.