



Gibson Technical Services Aims for **HIGH-QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE NETWORKS**

BY KRISTEN BECKMAN

Gibson Technical Services tells customers and potential clients not to ever expect to get the lowest bid from the company.

“But we provide a level of quality that sets us apart, with problem solving and experience that most other folks can’t bring to the table,” said Blake Chapman, Director of Wireless at GTS.

“There are a lot of groups out there now that have sub-contracted for large companies like us, or in some way have been linked to the industry, that are now claiming they’ve got these capabilities,” Chapman said. “They may be offering the customer a lower price on a project, but they don’t have the capabilities, experience or qualified personnel to deliver a ‘Cadillac’ final product, which is what we do.”

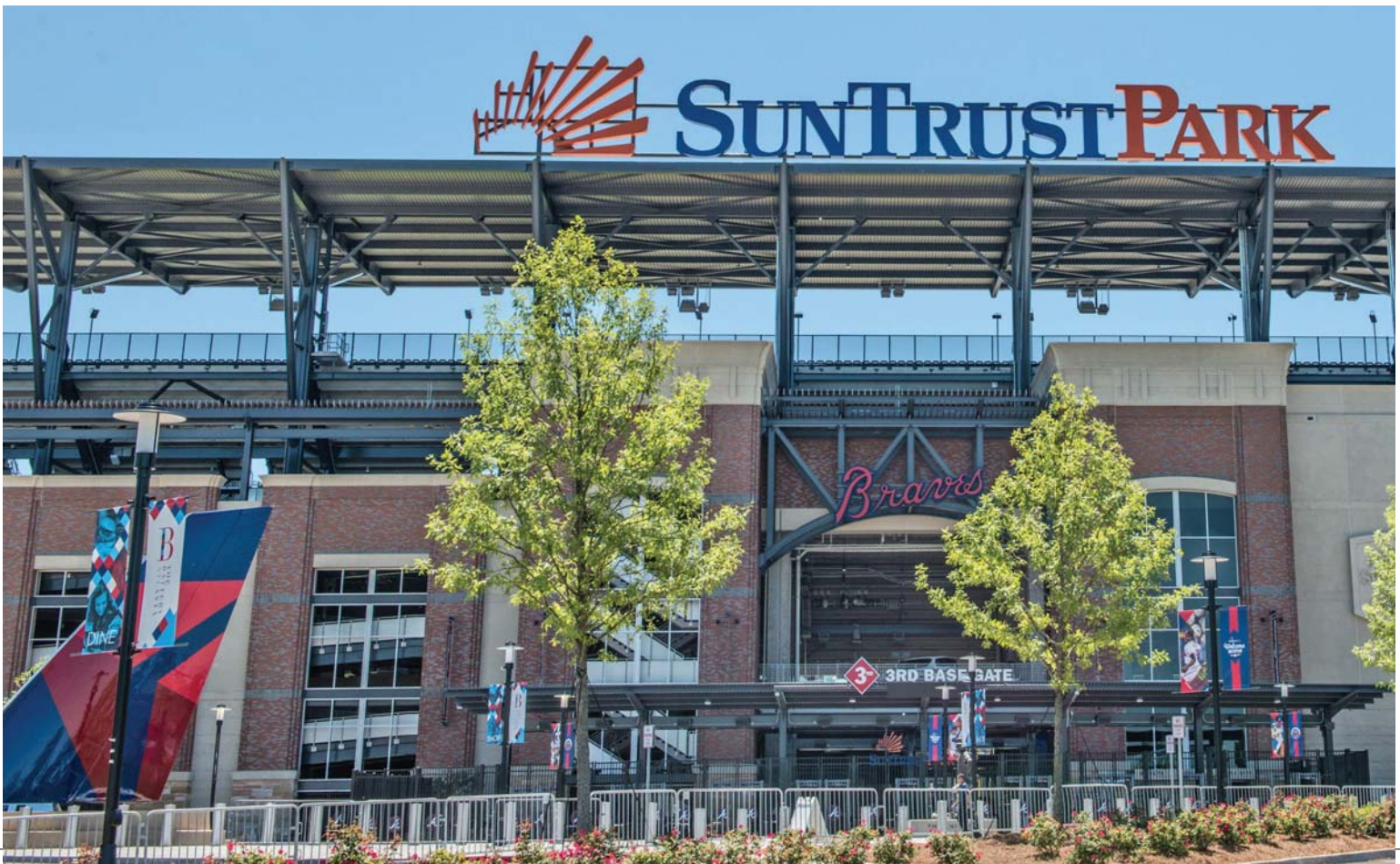
“You can’t substitute for that kind of experience,” said Chapman. “You can just hire us.”

CABLE ROOTS

Founded in 1990, GTS has 25 years of experience dating back to its early work providing design and consulting services for cable system operators and equipment manufacturers. The company’s cable roots expanded into fiber optic splicing and equipment installation as well as FCC proof testing, sweep and plant construction.

In 2002, GTS created a wireless division and began working with carriers and vendors on cellular tower projects. GTS has shifted along with the industry to in-building and small cell work. The company’s wireless division builds networks that provide residential and small-business broadband internet access.

“In the past five years, it’s been commercial in-building heavy — such as hospitals, stadiums and arenas — but most of those larger venues have been built out at this point,” said





Chapman. “So now it’s more of the mesh networks, campuses and small to medium-sized facilities.”

While many companies are focusing on the so-called mid-prise, or commercial buildings from roughly 100,000 to 500,000 square feet, Chapman said there remain plenty of large venue enterprise venues that still require in-building systems.

“There have been several NFL teams and large facilities that have purchased their own DAS,” said Chapman. “They’ve discovered they can make money leasing space back to the carriers. I think that’s going to be the next wave — enterprise-owned midsize to small hotels and buildings. There’s a market there, but I think it’s going to get over-run pretty quickly.”

Chapman said there is a lot of crossover in skillsets between its legacy cellular tower work and its current small cell and distributed antenna system deployments. The company offers total network services with a focus on in-house resources for a variety of projects. GTS has its own staff of engineers to guide projects for clients, including an RF engineer possessing Level 3 iBwave certification who does network design and assists with in-process deployment when optimization and design changes are required. GTS also utilizes the equipment and skillsets from its broadband and construction divisions

to perform large small cell deployments for carriers and neutral-host system owners.

In addition, as a general contractor that does work nationwide, the company can handle all physical aspects of site building, from shelter sets to headend builds, including land clearing, concrete pouring, building construction, HVAC and electrical work. Chapman said everything leading up to the DAS and small cell network itself is within its capabilities, from network cabling, to antennas, to fiber-optic cable work all the way to the final finesse work and commissioning and turnover to the customer.

Headquartered in Canton, Georgia, the company works on multiple large projects at any given time and sets up temporary local offices to support those projects.

“One thing that separates GTS from most of its competitors is owning all of our own equipment — fiber gear, bucket trucks, drill rigs and so on,” said Chapman. “On large projects that require these disciplines, we do most of the work in-house. Many contractors would rely more heavily on subcontractors. When we are doing pole lines or long-haul underground projects, we self-perform the bulk of the work. It allows for greater flexibility and tighter quality control. It’s true end-to-end.”

INDUSTRY TRENDS

A trend that is driving business in the commercial real estate market is the need for public-safety in-building coverage, which is mandated in many municipalities. Chapman said often public-safety contractors are legacy two-way radio companies that aren’t up to speed on the latest technology.

“We have the ability to come in and tell a customer we may not provide the lowest price, but we can offer a much more robust, quality long-term network for your public-safety needs,” said Chapman. “It can be a struggle to make the sale, when competing with other companies that don’t understand the most current network solutions available today. A building owner can realize a much better bang for the buck over the long term by purchasing a state-of-the-art network solution.”

There are multiple challenges network providers must tackle. Chapman said one of the biggest challenges facing in-building deployments is how to effectively optimize the physical footprint of the equipment inside facilities, from power, to cabling and active equipment. To building owners, every inch of real estate is a valuable commodity.

“I believe a smaller physical presence in these buildings is going to be important,” said Chapman. To save space on DC power cabling and conduit in facilities, the company has



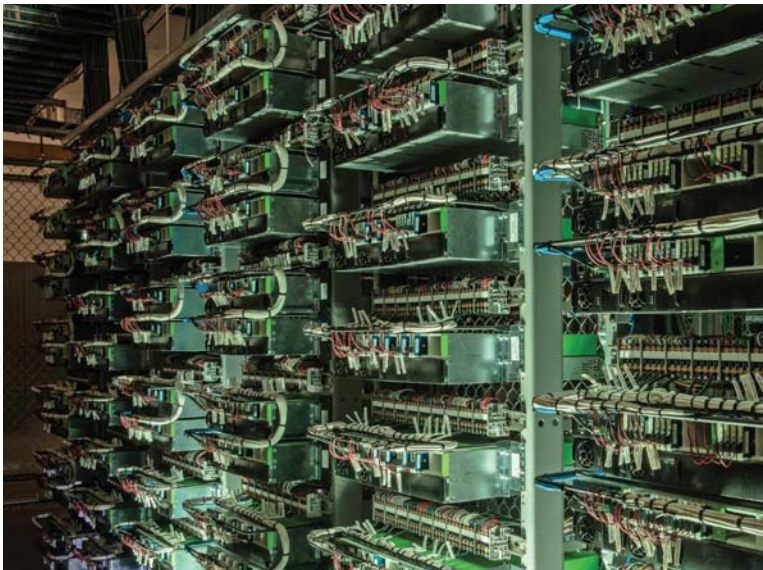


teamed with VoltServer, which has developed an innovative power solution, on several deployments.

“The true advantage is a much smaller footprint for the end customer and a more flexible power solution all over for future proofing,” said Chapman. “We’ve been working with them since their inception, so we have a great relationship with them and a lot of flexibility to co-design these big builds.”

Another challenge the company faces is educating clients and potential customers about the need to partner with an experienced and qualified contractor in an environment that is increasingly diluted with upstart contractors that lack experience, knowledge and likely staying power, Chapman said.

“We’re a 25-year-old company. We’re a debt-free operation. We have a large physical office that’s been established for years,” said Chapman. “There is a level of confidence in knowing your network integrator will be there for the long term.”



Having a contractor that a building owner knows can not only provide a quality deployment but will be there months and even years down the road to solve network issues that may crop up is crucial, he said. Contractors without a lot of experience may introduce undesirable mechanical and or electrical issues, affecting the long-term reliability of the network, he said. In addition, if work is not done to the most current standards and code, when the enterprise upgrades or expands later, it may find issues that will require expensive fixes, which could be disastrous if the original contractor is no longer in business or doesn’t stand by its work.

GTS offers routine maintenance as well as emergency operations maintenance responding to outages and other issues. Its lengthy history in wireless technology allows its technicians to quickly diagnose common problems and remedy them with minimal downtime.

“Our years of experience allow us to know what to troubleshoot and where to focus our technicians’ efforts and how to fix the issue, whereas some of these less experienced groups would not know where to start,” said Chapman. “Just because you can build it doesn’t mean you can troubleshoot and fix it.”

Designing, building and maintaining quality in-building networks requires knowledge and adaptability, said Chapman.

“We rarely find that a project is completed strictly per the original design,” said Chapman. “We generally provide creative ideas and ways to make the process much more efficient from installation to the final product. Most of the time our customers are extremely impressed with our alternative approach to improve their projects and provide a better overall experience.”

