

Features

Datum, Aditum enhance Dominion Properties' in-building Internet experience



In the last two years, Datum Consulting, a managed service provider and IT company has deployed Internet service in three Dominion Properties-owned buildings in Milwaukee with Aditum's Internet Management Service solution. Aditum offers fiber Internet for property managers so they can provide their tenants with premium high-speed connections. The company also provides routers for every tenant as well as systems to monitor how the Internet is being used and suspend individual accounts in the event of non-payment.

The Dominion buildings Datum deployed Aditum's solutions in were a pair of sustainable multifamily housing units, Sage on Jackson and Sage on Prospect, as well as a 36-unit apartment building located just blocks from the UW-Milwaukee campus.

Datum initially embraced Aditum when it was seeking a solution to build out an infrastructure allowing individual offices within a large building to have their own Internet access. Creating such an infrastructure would be a big undertaking that involved setting up custom virtual LANs, separating them and then doing individual bandwidth management, however. The process would

not only be complex, but would become more expensive in the future. At the time, it was the only option Datum thought was available, until it came across Aditum.

"We started to take a look at Aditum's products and the offering that was available," Datum Consulting CEO Jeff Norton said. "It ticked off a lot of those boxes—web managed interface, the ability to set up custom plans, segregation from a security perspective and ease of deployment. Those were some of the primary criteria that sold me on the product and the service."

Datum was initially to work with Dominion Properties to assist with cybersecurity issues. Norton presented an additional opportunity—reselling Internet to multiple tenants within the space. Dominion was interested in that prospect and Datum used Aditum's solutions to make it happen. Datum used a combination of user-owned equipment and Aditum's company owned equipment to bring Internet to these three Dominion buildings—and likely can do the same for other properties in the future.

"It's something that has taken our expertise to be able to deploy this, get it up and running, understanding the complexities around that and simplifying it for the building owner," Norton said. "Not only do they get to sell this to their tenants, but they also know that another company can handle support for larger scale issues versus having to take care of the individual tenants on a continuous basis. If something major happens, they can contact us and we can help make sure those systems are up and running and the hardware's running as it should."

'Round-the-clock IT support is just one benefit Dominion Properties and other building owners gain from Datum's services and Aditum's technology. There's also the potential revenue stream and the ability to market new tenants on the fact the high-speed fiber Internet will be included in their rent. Additionally, this setup makes it easier for building owners to collect rent—if a tenant doesn't pay on time, their individual Internet service can be shut off without disrupting the other tenants' service.

"That's probably one of the bigger add-ons for managing your own Internet within that building," Norton said. "Also not having to worry about tenants being without Internet or connectivity."

Meanwhile, the backend support Datum can offer keeps building owners from having to deal with providers directly. The Datum team can contact companies like AT&T to get help, deal with equipment or handle situations if the building connection is down.

"We'll have somebody at your building in a very short period of time who will understand if the issue is a fiber or equipment outage," Norton said. "If it is, we can be responsible for contacting (the provider), getting hold of the right people and speaking the language they're going to speak. It's definitely an advantage for the building owner to have support back end that has the knowledge and experience to help through these issues."

"Round-the-clock IT support is just one benefit Dominion Properties and other building owners gain from Datum's services and Aditum's technology. There's also the potential revenue stream and the

ability to market new tenants on the fact the high-speed fiber Internet will be included in their rent."

Aditum's solutions made Internet installation easier to Datum, and it made building operations more efficient for Dominion Properties. Prior to Datum and Aditum's involvement, Dominion Properties was working with Spectrum (Time Warner at the time), dealing with bulk contracts and disappearing modems. The property owner opted to work Aditum so it could bring its Internet in-house and avoid working with big telecommunications companies. It also wanted to have a simpler turnover process when a new tenant moved into a unit.

Overall, Aditum deployments can handle speeds up to one gigabit per tenant and 10 Gbps per property. When Dominion brought in the new system, it had been providing the Internet for free and continued to do so tenants continued to have one bill. Dominion gave tenants at its two higher-scale buildings comparable speed to what they were getting with Time Warner and gave them the option to update their speeds. Although it wasn't a direct revenue stream, including Internet allowed the property owner to increase rent. Dominion currently offers threetier Internet plans—15, 30 and 45 megabits. The base level is free and tenants can upgrade.

"With in the initial conversion to the new system, not a lot of people increased their speed because quite frankly, they were faster and more consistent," Dominion Properties Chief Financial Officer Michael Godfrey said. "The 15-megabit plan felt a lot faster over the fiber network."

Low latency connections like dedicated fiber are one of the biggest benefits that can be offered to tenants. They will almost always outperform a consumer product like cable modems in user experience and perceived performance satisfaction, even when tenants are offered packages that are technically slower than the ones that cable companies advertise.

Take this (very) simplified example for instance: a fiber connection with 10 milliseconds (ms) latency compared to a cable modem with 40ms latency can push four times the number of packets through in a one-second window of time. This means pages load and connections open much faster—even if the actual transfer speed of images and large files isn't technically any quicker, as it takes less time to begin loading them and in turn appears to be happening faster for the user.

The third building Dominion Properties is using Aditum's system in is more geared towards students and is in a tougher area to rent, but Godfrey still anticipates being able to raise rent by \$35 to \$40 a month because Internet will be included.



“Again, it’s an indirect revenue stream that way by increasing the market rent,” Godfrey said. “Then we’ll get the little kickers with silver and gold plans as I call them. If you’re in that sweet spot where you’re still charging market rent even though you’re at the top of it, (tenants) can justify being at the top of the market rent when they find out Internet is included.”

Godfrey now enjoys a much more streamlined process when it comes to equipment. Prior to working with Aditum, he was in position where he’d provide a router that he might not see again. Now, routers are at the properties office for purchase; once a tenant buys one, it’s logged into the system. If the tenant take it when then move, it’s simply deleted from the system, which takes very little time to do. Meanwhile, tenants who have their own router can be added to the system, too.

“If they have their router, it’s relatively easy,” Godfrey said. “They get an email, which provides customer instructions for how to program their router. I’ve gotten to the point where I say, ‘If this is something you can’t handle, contact the office and buy a zero-touch router for \$50.’ Once it’s up and running, it’s golden until they move out.”

Having a managed Internet service provider in-house has yielded several benefits for Dominion Properties, including increased property value. Included Internet not only means a higher rent roll in the short and longterm, even if tenants don’t realize they’re paying more.

“It’s more valuable to me because the infrastructure is there as well as the management,” Godfrey said. “It’s all of these indirect values that all coincide with them as a whole package. It does make the building more.”

Bringing the Aditum's solutions to some of Dominion Properties' Milwaukee buildings appears to be a win for all parties involved. Datum fulfilled its wish of having a simple way to manage hundreds of tenants' Internet with bandwidth plans, segregate each network without a lot of labor and set up networks efficiently. Meanwhile, Dominion has managed to sidestep cumbersome relationships with large telcom companies, save time and increase rent revenue.

"We've been extremely happy with just everything surrounding (Aditum)," Norton said. "From implementation to configuration to support and the fact that over the last two years, we have had practically zero support calls on any of this have been fantastic. I can't say that about a lot of other products and services out there."