



## CASE STUDY

Interface Consolidates Thrive Restaurant Group’s Vendor Ecosystem and Delivers Savings and Greater Planning Clarity with Managed SD-WAN, 4G/LTE, UCaaS and Security Systems

Interface’s managed network and business security services have been a game-changer for Thrive. We no longer worry about compliance, network connectivity or security issues and now have the capacity to rapidly expand our operations and focus on delivering superior customer experience.

*Brian Houchin, Director of IT, Thrive Restaurant Group*

### AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1975, Thrive Restaurant Group is one of Applebee’s largest franchisees in the US, operating 81 restaurants across ten states. Thrive has always been focused on delivering superior customer experiences and making a difference to the growing communities they serve.

### CHALLENGES

Thrive found itself struggling with common challenges that many geographically distributed businesses face, including managing multiple network, voice, and security providers, outdated CCTV hardware and limited IT staff.



Consolidated Vendors



Next-Gen Secure SD-WAN



Seamless Cloud Communications



Modernized Video Surveillance



Site-wide Remote Management



Troubleshooting Accountability

“With restaurants across ten states, we needed a partner who we could count on to manage our network, communications, and security for all locations,” explains Brian Houchin, Director of IT for Thrive Restaurant Group. “We were seeking a managed service provider with deep expertise in our space to be an extension of our IT team.”

### **Many Vendors, Little Accountability**

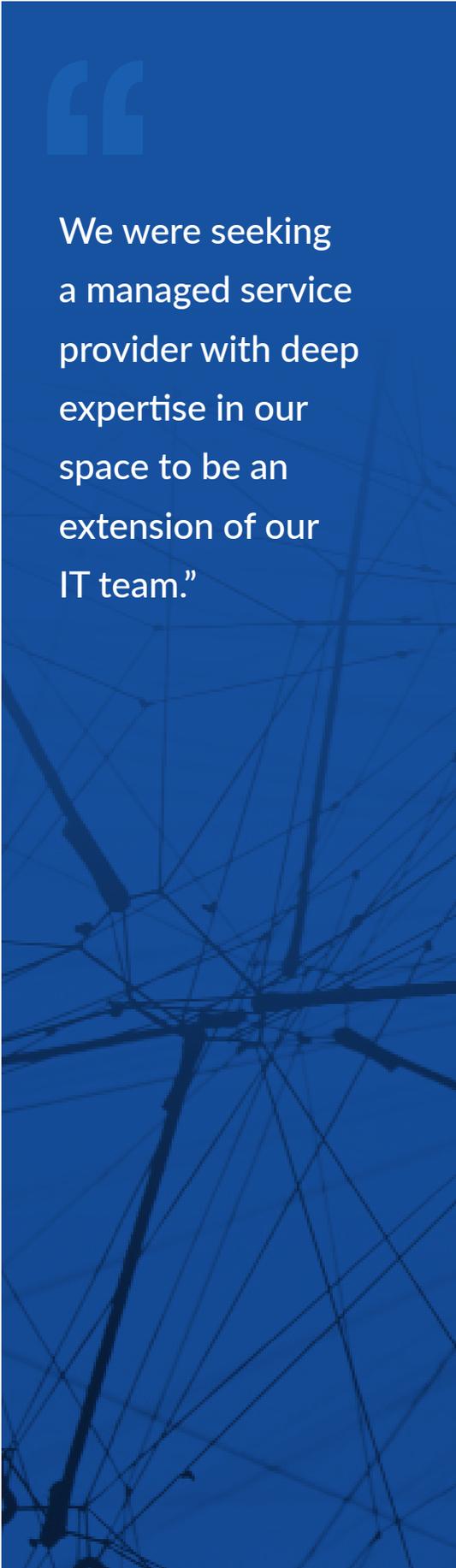
When it came to vendors, Thrive simply had too many. Troubleshooting technical issues was challenging as it was difficult to pin accountability on a specific vendor. In addition, tracking invoices, service credits, and administering multiple vendors was an inefficient and time-consuming exercise every month.

### **Legacy Hardware, Modern Challenges**

Outdated legacy hardware and changing regulations also posed a challenge for a 45-year-old company like Thrive. Unreliable CCTV equipment left the restaurants vulnerable to security risks. Constantly evolving PCI-compliance rules meant Houchin had to devote hours of his limited bandwidth to keeping up with the latest changes and updates so Thrive could avoid major penalties and security threats.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant disruption to Thrive’s business. Restaurant staff found it challenging to handle a sudden spike in call volumes as they had to work with a legacy phone system that was not scalable. In addition, the flexibility of offering curb-side pickup and take-out services was impossible to manage as there was no 4G wireless coverage outside the restaurant premises. Thrive realized that it was time to migrate to a secure, scalable network and communications backbone that would unclog the productivity bottlenecks and give the flexibility the restaurant chain needed to cater to changing customer needs.

Thrive turned to Interface and its trusted portfolio of managed network solutions leveraging Fortinet secure edge devices, cloud communications and business security services.



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Interface worked closely with Thrive to completely understand their business goals and unique requirements for their network, communications and security infrastructure.

### Secure SD-WAN

Interface implemented a next-generation secure SD-WAN architecture with network upgrades to guarantee seamless connectivity between Thrive's 81 locations. Interface combined that with 4G/LTE wireless capability, delivering an improved restaurant and guest experience. The LTE failover automatically takes over in the event of a primary network connection failure. With PCI-compliant managed network services from Interface, Houchin and Thrive never have to worry about compliance issues.

"We count on Interface's expertise to know what the current rules and regulations are for PCI and to keep us secure and compliant," he says.

### Seamless Cloud Communications

Interface also implemented unified communications as service (UCaaS) with cloud-based VoIP and auto-attendant features for Thrive's locations, helping drive increased call volume routing to their dedicated order center.

"We wanted to streamline the increased call volume into our individual restaurants," Houchin says. "We previously had days where we missed out on business because all our phone lines were busy. The UCaaS service from Interface allows us to properly route and handle additional orders, dramatically improving our customer experience while increasing revenue."

### Secure Video Surveillance

Interface upgraded Thrive's legacy CCTV infrastructure with a secure and uniform video surveillance platform with easy remote viewing from any location and simplified access management to boost restaurant security.

"The Interface team helped us replace outdated video equipment and installed additional cameras at our locations. They also provided adequate bandwidth to ensure our systems performed seamlessly. Now, we can immediately access and manage video feeds from anywhere," Houchin explains.



Interface managed services enable us to take additional orders, dramatically improving our customer experience while increasing revenue."

Since partnering with Interface, Thrive has stopped worrying about day-to-day network and security operations and started being more strategic to their business. With Interface as a trusted partner and extension of their IT team, Houchin and Thrive are getting more done every day.

“Interface’s managed network and business security services truly lets us do more with the staff we have. From the time-savings on my part, to the cost-savings of not needing to hire additional IT staff for a problem that may disappear tomorrow. It just gives us so much more transparency and planning clarity,” Houchin says.

By consolidating their SD-WAN, UCaaS, CCTV and 4G/LTE services with Interface, Thrive gets real accountability when they have a question or need help, never the vendor run-around, and billing is a snap. “Our accounting is just so much faster and easier now. We get a single bill for everything from Interface. No headaches, no finger-pointing, no tracking down multiple vendors and purchase orders. It’s been a great experience for us,” he says. “Problems get solved quickly and correctly.”

But perhaps the greatest advantage Thrive gets from Interface is the ability to boldly and aggressively grow and expand, confident that Interface’s 24/7 managed services will always be ready to support that growth with scalable solutions to fit Thrive’s additional locations and changing needs -- today, tomorrow and well into the future.

**“We’ve had a chance to test out multiple vendors for network, communications and business security and Interface definitely has provided us the best experience. They are a true long-term partner, not a vendor.”**

*-Brian Houchin, Director of IT, Thrive Restaurant Group*

Interface Security Systems is a leading managed services provider delivering managed network, asset protection, and business intelligence solutions to distributed enterprises.

Our network and monitoring centers connect and protect client businesses 24/7. By streamlining operations, improving security, and reducing IT costs, we maximize ROI for the nation’s top brands.