

Lumen supports election coverage with winning network solutions



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The best place to watch sports in Tulsa, Oklahoma, may be in the basement of the city hall. Surrounded by an array of video screens, Lumen technicians monitor live video feeds 24 hours a day. Before the pandemic struck, Rick Gibson, the Director of CDN and Vyvx Operations, estimated that in normal times, 80% of the live broadcast traffic involved sporting events.

“Of course, something else came along to keep us busy instead,” he said with a smile.

The Lumen Content Delivery Network (CDN) and Lumen Vyvx solutions played active roles supporting domestic news organizations covering the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign. Lumen Vyvx transmits live video feeds over IP for news agencies, while Lumen CDN streams live news broadcasts to viewers around the world. The Tulsa Network Operations Center works in concert with the NOC in Broomfield, Colorado, providing solid redundancy.

“Our clients are impressed with our fiber footprint,” says Chad Fleming, who runs Lumen’s NOCs. “Not many ‘hits’ require us to go off network. We can usually tap directly into our tribal network.”



But several key events also took place in non-traditional settings, partly in response to Covid-19. When parking lots became stand-ins for traditional convention halls, Lumen crews had to be creative when it came to setting up remote feeds.

They also had to be ready for the unexpected. When the Lumen team arrived onsite at the University of Utah to set up a remote TV feed for the Vice-Presidential debate, they learned at the last minute that the theater hosting the event lacked the right amount of streaming capacity, forcing the team to push new

fiber to the building only days before the debate took place.

“It was one of those years when we learned that our operations team could do things that we had not done before,” said Fleming.

One of the world’s biggest news organizations trusted Senior Technical Service Manager Bill Stern to make sure our CDN services could handle their election night traffic—partly because the client has worked with Stern for over a decade and partly because of his calm demeanor.

“We do a lot of planning. I have been doing events like this for over two decades and that experience calms any nerves. It also helps that I have the full support of my engineering and operations colleagues as well as management, product and sales,” he said. “We expected the first day to be busy. We didn’t know exactly what to expect after that day. But we prepare for anything and everything.”

“We take the time to listen to our customers, so we find out in detail well in advance what they need,” added Gibson. “As we went into the night, we were watching traffic very closely. We do that with large events anyway.”

Sarah Wu, the Director of Product Management, was also unfazed as traffic on the Lumen CDN spiked in a matter of minutes and remained elevated for roughly six hours on election night. With viewers watching closely as results continued to trickle in, traffic remained consistently high throughout the rest of the week.

“We knew we had the network capacity and good teams in place to stay in contact with our client and make sure all their streaming needs were met,” she said. “We treated it as business as usual, even though an election broadcast that runs several days isn’t usual at all.”

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