



## ASSOCIATED FOOD STORES

- + **CUSTOMER PROFILE**  
Wholesale food distributor and operator of 45 retail outlets, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah
- + **BUSINESS OBJECTIVES**  
Finding a robust, flexible and cost effective communications service
- + **SOLUTION**  
IP/MPLS VPN, SIP Solutions
- + **BUSINESS OUTCOME**  
Improved communication services with increased efficiency and reduced costs

**"Electric Lightwave takes care of us;  
we take care of our business."**



**David Tigner**

Associated Food Stores,  
Senior Network Engineer

# MAKING COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE A STRATEGIC ASSET

## Business Challenge

Associated Food Stores is a cooperative wholesale food distributor to 400 retailers in eight western states. Headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, they also operate 45 retail grocery stores in the region. With a diverse business model and broad operational reach, Associated Food Stores needed robust, flexible and cost effective communications service. The technology staff maintains numerous mission critical voice and data applications to keep its stores, pharmacies and distribution centers running smoothly. With a team of only five responsible for technical operations, distractions are intolerable. "We run a lean IT department and depend on our communications to perform the way we want them to," said David Tigner, Senior Network Engineer at Associated Food Stores. "We expect good customer support and solutions that meet our needs."

Market and competitive conditions pushed Associated Food Stores to require more from its communications service provider. Tigner demanded: lower costs, improved customer support, flexible data and voice solutions, more dynamic network service and guidance building a technology roadmap for the future. "We were spending too much time and money on communications services and we needed to make a change," said Tigner.

## Approach

Electric Lightwave's regional sales team pursued Associated Food Stores for well over a year and finally convinced Tigner with their collaborative approach. Associated Food Stores began migrating services to Electric Lightwave even though the change meant significant termination costs charged by the incumbent provider. By streamlining service and eliminating unused lines, Electric Lightwave presented Associated Food Stores with a sizeable savings on their monthly recurring charges (MRC). "Our previous provider hit us with significant termination fees" said Tigner, "We broke even in less than a year."

Electric Lightwave's initial service consisted of Business Lines and MPLS on two independent networks. The MPLS solution increased flexibility, allowing Associated Food Stores to purchase bandwidth incrementally based on the requirements of each store and the ability to scale service on-demand to support rapidly changing needs. With reliable service in place, Associated Food Stores still faced communications service challenges and consulted with Electric Lightwave as a partner to develop the new solutions they needed. "Once Electric Lightwave established itself as being dependable and willing to work with us, it was clear we could turn our communications services into a competitive asset," said Tigner.

Associated Food Stores developed a strategy with Electric Lightwave to centralize their network infrastructure gradually over time. As legacy service contracts expire at each Associated Food Store location, existing PRI trunks migrate to Electric Lightwave's SIP Solution service. Consolidating service to SIP Trunking moves control to company headquarters and away from remote retail locations. Centralizing allows troubleshooting to take place at headquarters, eliminating the need for costly and inefficient on-site activity. Tigner and his team now proactively manage service for multiple locations in real-time from a single platform. Since SIP Solutions service is not locked to the location, Associated Food Stores no longer pays for unused circuits. They achieve the same service level with fewer call paths.

## Results

Beginning with a smooth initial install, Electric Lightwave earned the trust of Associated Food Stores by listening to their needs, providing proactive support, offering a consultative resource and evolving service to meet their changing needs. "Electric Lightwave takes care of us," said Tigner. "We take care of our business."

Associated Food Stores now benefits from improved network efficiency with Electric Lightwave's IP/MPLS VPN, easier billing reconciliation with easy-to-read monthly bills and reduced costs by eliminating unused lines.

With control increasingly centralized at the Salt Lake City headquarters, Associated Food Stores realizes improved communications services that require far less resources and expense than it did before. They consider Electric Lightwave a business partner, not just a vendor and work collaboratively to chart a course for future new services including redundancy solutions.



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## CUSTOMER BENEFITS

- + Significantly reduced monthly recurring charges with streamlined services and elimination of unused lines.
- + Ability to scale service on-demand based on rapidly changing needs of each store.
- + A dependable partner with Electric Lightwave developing new solutions to meet new requirements.
- + Ability to proactively manage service for multiple locations in real-time from a single platform.

## ABOUT ELECTRIC LIGHTWAVE™

Electric Lightwave™, an Integra company, serves as a trusted network infrastructure partner to enterprises, government agencies and carriers in select markets throughout the western United States. We combine dense metro and intercity fiber assets, enterprise-grade network solutions, including Ethernet, Wavelengths and IP, with a highly responsive and easy to do business with approach. Electric Lightwave offers a premium service experience to match our premium network infrastructure solutions.

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