

Deploying Small Cells Nationally

How Vertix Consulting helped a top U.S.
tower company build a small cell deployment
management model



THE CHALLENGE

A major national US tower company and small cells implementation provider had just signed its largest ever contract to build small cells nationwide, with strict contract provisions around timeline and average fiber length per node. Prior builds had been moderate in size and had not tested the deployment capabilities of the Client to the same degree. In order to deliver on its customer's build expectations it needed to not only ramp capacity, but also to manage the locally-delivered build as a coherent national program with standardized milestones, forecasting approaches, and estimating philosophy. The Client also needed to be able to track and report progress coherently and to present and summarize progress as a consistent program vs. a collection of individual district deployments. This needed to be achieved within the context of an organization that had a large degree of geographic autonomy, inflexible toolsets, and varying build approaches and forecasting practices.



THE SOLUTION

Vertex leveraged its significant prior experience with successfully program managing — and even rescuing — large scale network deployments. Its proven approach to setting delivery commitments, forecasting effectively, managing fallout, and presenting progress was utilized to help the client formulate its national deployment management approach from the ground-up. This included:

- Defining staffing metrics and org design in order to scale for increased build. Implemented ongoing headcount tracking and ratio analysis to identify areas of under and over staffing
- Developing tools to capture and report on design details prior to node project creation in project management tools. This enabled customer and client management teams to identify trends and ensure contract compliance
- Creating a new approach to corporate build commitments that were meaningful and which the organization could be measured against. This involved separating the customer's contractualized build commitment from the internal deployment commitments from each district. These commitments could be re-cast at the beginning of each new quarter, but represented a fixed performance commitment for the quarter as a whole, vs. typical forecasting which is continually revised by the field and doesn't represent a consistent performance goal
- Forecasting itself was standardized in the corporate deployment tool vs. offboard local spreadsheets. A methodology was established around when forecasts would need to be updated prior to a weekly 'snap' which would be used to communicate plans and status to the client
- A methodology for measuring weekly accomplishments vs. forecasts was implemented, and



this included fallout reporting and reason codes so that it could be clearly understood why a node that was forecast for that week was pushed out. This created transparency in the deployment process, indicated specific aspects of the deployment that needed to be improved (e.g., permitting) and gave the necessary detail needed to fully explain status to the customer

- Forecasting health reports that highlighted the quality of forecasting through key indicators such as negative cycle times between key milestones
- Developed and trained the organization to use new production dashboards that enabled teams to identify risks and to improve future forecasting and client commitments

THE RESULTS

Our approach gave the Client:

- An objective and transparent method of defining goals and commitments for small cells deployment that field teams could be held to accomplishing, and that could be incorporated into their annual performance goals
- A standard, national approach to forecasting small cells deployment
- Continual feedback on the quality of forecasting, so that advice could be given to specific field teams on how to improve their forecasting capabilities, ultimately improving the forecasts that were provided to the end customers
- Highest ever monthly, quarterly, and annual production numbers
- Sufficient and accurate data and reports to meet customer demands and to avoid daily scrutiny



The new deployment management model was rolled out incrementally, with the initial focus on national adoption of a standardized forecasting approach. Once that was bedded in, further enhancements were rolled out until all aspects of the deployment management approach had been transformed, with significant benefits for both the client – and ultimately – its customers.





About Vertex Consulting

We are a highly specialized consulting firm that provides pragmatic and actionable insights on the most critical issues faced by providers and consumers of telecom, media services, and technology.

At Vertex, we pursue our collective passion for helping carriers, OEMs, tower companies, MSOs, network services vendors, equipment suppliers, and telecom and technology consumers resolve their most complex strategy, sourcing, and deployment challenges. From helping a carrier deploy a 4G network to negotiating an IoT services contract for a client in the manufacturing sector, we cover the entire TMT value chain.

Our focus and simplified model enables us to deliver an alternative vision for our clients: producing client-centered solutions in a way that only experienced and proven professionals can.

For more information on Vertex and its services portfolio please visit www.vertexconsulting.com & follow us on twitter @vertexconsult.