

7 QUESTIONS ABOUT

Rural Connectivity



Rural Connectivity presents diverse challenges, with each solved problem advancing the growth and development of the industry. Ben Royer, Operations Manager for Royell Communications, began his career in the industry's infancy, and shares his experience about what it takes to be successful connecting rural areas.

WHAT IS ROYELL'S ORIGIN STORY?

I got my start in the industry probably a lot earlier than most. I was 12 years old and my father Joe, who owns Royell, had a small part-time computer business back in the '90s. He taught me how to build computers and from that point forward, I helped him grow the business. In 1999, he and his late business partner built an internet company to compete with a local dial-up company that was overcharging and underdelivering. Starting also with dial-up internet service, we grew our customer base very quickly – eventually putting that competitor out of business. In 2001, we started with our wireless internet service.

Our business grew from the onset not only because we provide the best quality service, but also, we firmly believe in forming strong community relationships. We have grown because of our dedication to our customers, who appreciate the service and support we take so seriously. We've grown to 25 employees, serving over 6,000 customers in nine counties – and keep growing strong. We strive to evolve with the industry, keeping pace with so we started offering DirecTV, Dish Network, and VoIP services. We're especially proud that we haven't had a single month in which our customer base has not grown since 1999.

WHAT ARE THE UNIQUE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF THE RURAL CUSTOMER?

In short, budget. In smaller communities, both residential customers and businesses need to spend less and get more. Internet is a necessity, but profit margins are tight. Our business is unique because we provide a quality connection that's affordable, and a level of support that helps small businesses who don't have the staffing budget for an internal IT person really excel in their technology needs.

There are various challenges when connecting rural areas. Central Illinois can seem flat and full of cornfields, making it simple to connect people. However, abundant forests are an obstacle. We like to say there's always a signal – it just depends on how high you're willing to go to get it. Consequently, getting around those large trees to get a shot back to one of our towers is the most difficult physical challenge.

WHICH CAMBIUM NETWORKS PRODUCTS ARE YOU WORKING WITH CURRENTLY?

We were one of the first adopters of Cambium Networks WiMAX solution, the PMP 320, and our loyalty has expanded to include all the Cambium Networks product lines. We use both of Cambium's current Point-to-Multipoint (PMP) product lines, ePMP and 450. For backhauling customer's broadband data, we use nearly all of the Point-to-Point (PTP) offerings as well, including unlicensed 670 products and the PTP 820 licensed microwave products.

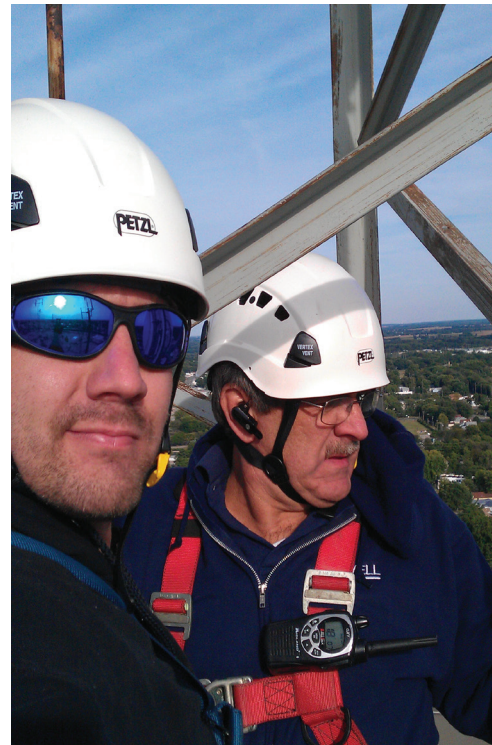
We also complement our PMP equipment with Cambium's Wi-Fi offerings to further extend our services. In 2018, we launched managed routers along with our broadband services, and now have over a 90% take rate for new customers. We manage all of this equipment using cnMaestro™ cloud-based network controller, rounding out our use of the Cambium Networks portfolio.

WHY DO YOU USE CAMBIUM NETWORKS PRODUCTS OVER THE COMPETITION?

In one word – reliability, proven throughout the years. Occasionally we've explored other manufacturers, but we always just come back to Cambium Networks' quality and reliability. Additionally, I trust the people at Cambium Networks. Our business is family-centric; we treat customers like our own, and so does Cambium Networks. Over the years, I've established relationships with people there that go beyond making a dollar and moving on. We treat one another like family and that partnership has helped us both grow our businesses.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT SUCCEEDING WITH A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT DEPLOYMENT?

Some of our more difficult deployments are at remote sites. For instance, we had one deployment by a lake in the middle of the country. Homes are sparsely populated around the lake, with the exception of one community with about 26 homes next to one another. The bandwidth demand for this local area was high. It was a unique challenge to utilize the available tower despite the penetration issues of trees, the lake, and the extensive spans of farmland. We were able to solve this issue by overlaying different Cambium Networks technologies, supplying high demand bandwidth to the smaller community nearby, then connecting long range and foliage-penetrating equipment to reach both the houses surrounded by trees and those out in the distance.



HOW DOES CNMAESTRO™ HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR EQUIPMENT?

We were one of the early adopters of cnMaestro, which continues to evolve as an increasingly powerful tool. The Cambium Networks team is very receptive to customer wants and needs, and cnMaestro becomes more effective as a direct result. We manage 5,557 devices with cnMaestro and add more every day. cnMaestro's "single pane of glass" management really drives our managed router services, enabling our ability to interface with every customer, and facilitating our technical support staff in identifying and addressing issues.

WHAT IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN THIS INDUSTRY?

The most successful people in any industry are those that are passionate about their work. I'm very proud to work at this company with my father, who taught me not only a lot about this business, but also about the importance of taking care of the people around you. That's the spirit behind Royell's success, the recognition that passion and commitment to the community helps everyone succeed.