

AEP SmartGate Stands the Test of Time at the City of Lenexa

The city of Lenexa is a 48,000-person bedroom community 15 miles from Kansas City.

Don't let its small size fool you; it's no backwater. The City of Lenexa is a step ahead of most local governments in the country when it comes to rolling out innovative technologies. "We're on the edge technologically," says Michael Lawrence, CTO and architect of the current network environment at the City of Lenexa.

As such, the City of Lenexa was one of the first local governments to implement a paperless office environment. They distribute 'paperless packets' electronically to Council members, the media, and the community. They also scan old paper documents into digital files, making it easier for staff to search and find those documents. Plus, digital files can be secured behind a robust firewall.

A Rose by Any Other Name

Lawrence joined the city's IT team in 1996. Shortly after he arrived, they implemented Citrix Extranet™, a Virtual Private Network (VPN) for remote access to the City of Lenexa's network. Another example of technology trailblazing, remote access via a VPN was a revolutionary technology a decade ago. With the new VPN in place, City of Lenexa could create encrypted and authenticated virtual private networks that secured the delivery of data and applications over the Internet.

"We've gone with a VPN strategy since the very beginning. We're out on the edge technologically."

**Michael Lawrence,
Chief Technology Officer
City of Lenexa**



Employees and Council members used the VPN to securely log on to email and access applications and other data from remote locations. That was just the beginning. The VPN would evolve to support telecommuting staff, Council members and traveling employees. More than ten years on, Lawrence says the VPN set-up still works like a charm for the City of Lenexa.

In 2003, Citrix ended the sales and support of Extranet. Lawrence then decided to convert the VPN licensing over to V-One Corporation. (In 2005, AEP Networks purchased V-One Corporation.) Though the product name has since changed—it's now called AEP SmartGate™—Lawrence says the solution and technical support have stood the test of time.

Another reason SmartGate continues to align with the City of Lenexa's IT philosophy is because it meets all of the city's stringent security requirements. AEP SmartGate's security certifications include Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 140-2 and AES encryption—two of the top security certifications in the industry.

"Tech support for SmartGate is excellent. But, in practice, the product is so good that I don't need to call support."

Michael Lawrence

Remote Access Isn't Just About Email

SmartGate wasn't implemented just so staff and Council members could occasionally check email from home. It extends the city's entire network beyond the constraints of a physical location. Currently, more than 61 employees use remote access in a variety of complex scenarios.

The following examples highlight some of the ways secure remote access works to improve efficiency, reduce absenteeism and make communication faster and easier.

More Flexibility for Staff

There are lots of reasons to enable employees to work from home, and AEP SmartGate is ideal for this scenario. By securely logging on to the network via SmartGate, City of Lenexa administrators can access all their work data and software applications seamlessly from home. This solution works especially well for employees on maternity leave, recovering from illness, or those who require more flexibility.

By being able to access the network outside of business hours, employees tend to take fewer sick days and can also be productive outside of regular office hours, says Lawrence.

“They were saying: ‘It’s super secure. It’s wonderful.’ When I looked at the system I saw it was powered by SmartGate. It’s a pretty great feeling when your technology choice of many years ago gets validated.”

Keeping Council Connected

Like administrators working from home, Council members and the mayor also connect to the network remotely via SmartGate to retrieve email and read materials prior to meetings.

Remote access is especially key for these users because they’re not physically at the City of Lenexa offices every day as they have regular day jobs. If Council members had to be on-site to access sensitive documents or applications, it’s likely they would be less productive and efficient.

On the Road Again

While the majority of city employees work within the organization’s walls, many spend their days on the road. For example, zoning and building inspectors are out of the office most of the day doing site visits. Rather than spend extra time driving back and forth between the office and job sites, inspectors can instantly and securely connect to the city network from their vehicles and file reports from the road.

Lawrence runs VPN encryption from the inspectors’ cars back to the city’s secure network, making it virtually impossible for the information to be accessed by unauthorized users.

About AEP Networks

AEP Networks offers a comprehensive Policy Networking solution that provides complete security starting at the endpoints and working throughout a network – from the edge to the core. AEP’s integrated portfolio of security products includes network admission control enforcement points, identity-based application security gateways, SSL VPNs, CAPS approved high assurance IPsec-based VPN encryptors, and FIPS certified hardware security modules for key management. Our products address the most demanding security requirements of public-sector organizations and commercial enterprises internationally. The company has design and development offices in its headquarters in Somerset, New Jersey, USA and Hemel Hempstead, UK.

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