

# GREAT Connections

## The Need for Speed at the Strategic Air & Space Museum







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# GREAT Connections

**"The sky's the limit."** How often have we heard this expression and derived inspiration from it? Whether in our business or personal endeavors, it's encouraging to think about the virtually unlimited potential that can result from hard work.

Since this issue of *GREAT Connections* includes a **Business Spotlight on the Strategic Air & Space Museum**, the sky naturally comes to mind. The aircraft and spacecraft on display there were once flying through the sky at enormous speeds, and now they've landed in an impressive place of education and discovery. During the summer of 2015, Great Plains Communications was honored to be chosen as the new communications and technology partner for the Museum, bringing them 100 Mbps download and upload speeds. You can read more about this Nebraska treasure on pages 4 and 5.

On page 3, we answer this question: **What Happens in the Network Operations Center?** It's "Communications Central" for Great Plains Communications and the reason you can count on reliable services.

Also in this issue, you'll find a couple of marketing-related articles to help your business soar to new heights. There's **Get Down to Business on YouTube** on page 6 and **Brand Advocates are Your Raving Fans** on page 7.

With the right communications technology on board, the sky's the limit for the years ahead. Contact our Business Development team to help you get your plans off the ground.



Sincerely,

Todd Foje  
Chief Executive Officer

# What Happens in the **Network Operations Center?**

*It's "Communications Central" for the receipt and dissemination of network status information*



**W**e know communications services are mission critical to your business. After all, if your Internet stops working, your employees stop working. That's why Great Plains Communications maintains a Network Operations Center (NOC) to monitor the performance and availability of our networks and systems.

## **Monitoring and Dispatch 24x7x365**

Wyatt Leehy, NOC Manager, explains, "The Great Plains Communications NOC is an operations center in every sense. We have a team of Technicians collocated in a single, large room. Mounted to one wall are eight large monitors that display real-time information concerning the performance and availability of our networks and systems. Everything from the temperature in a central office to the status of our most critical network connections are monitored 24x7x365."

Who works at the NOC? Leehy answers, "We currently have three Technicians during normal business hours, each with rotating responsibilities for different aspects of the Great Plains Communications network. These responsibilities include network surveillance and dispatch, overflow/escalation and special projects (primarily for improving and expanding the NOC's processes and procedures). After normal business hours, we outsource network surveillance and dispatch to a third party who has authority to dispatch and escalate network disruptions as needed."

As a business customer of Great Plains Communications, the NOC gives you an immediate single point of contact concerning the performance and availability of your service. You can also

feel confident knowing we are committed to delivering reliable performance.

Mike Huggenberger, Senior Director of Technology and Network Services, adds, "We take this function very seriously. Inside the NOC, we utilize various tools and processes to 'watch' our network for anomalies—which could be an increasing temperature in a central office, abnormal bandwidth utilization on a critical network connection or a major network outage. We also work with our Engineering teams to develop and report on service level agreement metrics to ensure our services exceed customer expectations."

## **A First for Great Plains Communications**

In July 2015, Great Plains Communications became the first Tier III Service Provider in the nation to achieve ISO9001:2008 and TL9000-VR5.5/5.0 certifications under product category 7.3.2 for its NOC. While these letters and numbers may not mean much to you, the hard work they represent will benefit your business.

The TL9000 Quality Management System (QMS) is designed specifically for the communications industry. The purpose is to define the distinctive QMS requirements for design, development, production, delivery and service. In addition, the system identifies measurements to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of quality implementation and improvement programs.

"Achieving these certifications is an important milestone for Great Plains Communications. It demonstrates to our customers and stakeholders that we are committed to delivering quality service and continuous improvement," says Huggenberger.



# Strategic Air & Space Museum

*Visitors can “Fly Through History” at one of the top tourist sites in Nebraska*

**The Strategic Air & Space Museum is a 330,000-square-foot facility near Exit 426 on Interstate 80 next to Mahoney State Park, approximately midway between Lincoln and Omaha. A Smithsonian Affiliate, the Museum welcomes over 110,000 visitors annually and is considered one of the premier air and space museums in the United States. Its mission: “To ignite the thrill of innovation and discovery through the ultimate guest experience.”**

Visitors can take a close look at about 40 aircraft and spacecraft that span 70 years of aviation history, mostly from the Cold War era. The Strategic Air & Space Museum includes two indoor exhibition hangars, an indoor restoration hangar, museum store, curatorial offices and storage, atrium, two education classrooms, a science demonstration room, theater with seating for 180, conference room, library, restaurant and administration offices.

The Museum features a children’s science zone and is committed to the development of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) educational programs. It’s a recognized leader in informal out-of-the-classroom STEM education for the region.

## **The Need for Speed**

Given the many online activities of visitors and employees, the Museum needs fast, reliable Internet service. Unfortunately, the previous communications provider failed to deliver.

Deb Hermann, Director of Marketing & Public Relations, notes, “We only had 6 Mbps speed throughout the Strategic Air & Space Museum, which did not accommodate large events or rentals when many mobile devices were in use. Connectivity issues also caused problems with our cash registers in admissions and the museum store when we needed to execute credit card transactions, and our employees would often experience slow speeds which reduced their productivity.”

To find a communications provider able to meet the Museum’s Internet requirements, the Museum initiated an RFP (Request for Proposal) process. Great Plains Communications won this RFP due to factors including quality, customer service and price.

Jeff Mason, Network Account Manager for Great Plains Communications, says, “We welcomed the Strategic Air & Space Museum as a new customer in July 2015. Great Plains Communications now provides



the Museum with 100 Mbps symmetrical Dedicated Internet Access—a huge upgrade from the 6 Mbps service from the previous provider.”

### Boring Under the Interstate

Extensive underground construction was needed to connect the Museum with the Great Plains Communications fiber network. Explains Bob Marksmeier, OSP Field Engineer, “Start to finish, the project took us roughly two weeks, which was an accelerated pace to meet the Museum’s deadline. The most challenging part was making a 1,000-foot bore underneath Interstate 80 through limestone and sandstone rock, which is not an easy task.”

Dr. Mike McGinnis, Brig. Gen. (Ret), is Executive Director of the Strategic Air & Space Museum. He greatly appreciates the construction work done by Great Plains Communications and the benefits the new Internet service brings to the Museum.

*As a result of Great Plains Communications’ Dedicated Internet Access, employees of the Strategic Air & Space Museum are now able to work more efficiently and effectively.”*

— DR. MIKE MCGINNIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC AIR & SPACE MUSEUM

### A Successful Partnership Takes Flight

Says McGinnis, “As a result of Great Plains Communications’ Dedicated Internet Access, employees of the Strategic Air & Space Museum are now able to work more efficiently and effectively. In addition, our guests have much better Wi-Fi connectivity, which greatly improves their experience while visiting the Museum. The increased speed and improved performance of our Internet service will also enable us to successfully host more large events, with assurance that attendees will be able to stay connected on their mobile devices.”

In a place filled with aircraft and spacecraft, fast speeds seem right at home.



### Museum to Change Name During 2016

On June 25, 2015, the Strategic Air & Space Museum announced a decision by its Board of Directors to change its name to “Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum.”

This decision came about from a process involving many months of community engagement feedback. When Executive Director, Dr. Mike McGinnis, joined the Museum in January of 2014, one of his top priorities was to develop a five-year plan. The plan consisted of three strategic initiatives: (1) preserve the history of Strategic Air Command (SAC); (2) develop and deliver STEM education to K-12 groups; and (3) upgrade the museum’s appearance and facilities.

According to McGinnis, “The new name reflects the Museum’s vision to offer guests the opportunity to learn about the history of Strategic Air Command and to experience the science of air and space flight.”

Once legal work is completed to officially change its name, the Museum will begin replacing signage and develop a new website. The current plan is to unveil the Museum’s new logo sometime in the spring of 2016.

## Our Creative Media Producer's Tips on Using YouTube

Great Plains Communications started our YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/user/greatplainscomm](http://www.youtube.com/user/greatplainscomm)) in 2010 as part of an online strategy to increase our web presence and strengthen our company image. It's a place to host our TV commercials, tutorials and community events.

Thomas White, Creative Media Producer, notes, "Since the channel's launch, we have uploaded over 100 videos and received over 26,000 views. Many of the videos are embedded in our company blog and get cross-posted to various social media sites. YouTube is a great place to show what your company is about, share information and educate customers. Finding your niche will make your business videos successful. Our most successful videos are community events and tutorials."

What's his advice to other businesses getting started on YouTube? He replies, "Decide what success would be for your channel. Are you trying to get high subscribers and views? Or do you just want to house all your videos in one place and increase your search engine optimization? They are two very different approaches but both offer significant value. We find our value from being able to house all our videos in one place that's easy for people to find."



Thomas White, Creative Media Producer

# Get Down to Business on YouTube

*There are many good reasons to create and post videos*



If your business is not using YouTube, you may want to reconsider. Every day, people watch hundreds of millions of hours on YouTube and generate billions of views. YouTube is also the second largest search engine next to Google. Given this level of activity, it makes sense to take advantage of YouTube's potential for a variety of marketing, customer service, recruiting and training activities.

How could your business use YouTube? Here are some ideas:

### Video Marketing

Use this method for engaging potential customers when words alone don't do the trick. Provide details about your products, and show how they're used. Or, do something completely unexpected that's likely to go viral.

### Product Information

For customers who are already doing business with you, videos are a great way to keep them happy. Provide step-by-step instructions that will help them use your products.

### FAQs

While Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) can be written, why not take it a step further and provide a personal touch? As with product information, you can demonstrate some things much more easily using video.

### Recruiting

Consider creating a series of recruiting videos that show your various departments, give a tour of the facility and talk about company values and expectations. Upon applying for work, potential candidates will feel more comfortable if they have already gotten to know you online.

### Testimonials

What's better than a potential customer reading about a raving fan? A potential customer seeing that raving fan! A video can bring a customer testimonial to life.





# Brand Advocates are Your Raving Fans

*Your business can  
win big by encouraging  
these customers*



Customers who buy your products are great, and those who tell a few others about you are even better. But the most valuable type of customers are your raving fans, otherwise known as brand advocates. These customers can have a huge impact on your business; since they love it so much, they regularly want to sing its praises. Brand advocates will tell glowing stories about your products and services during conversations with friends, family and co-workers. They will also post enthusiastic recommendations online via social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

Since potential customers tend to believe messages that come from other customers more than messages directly from companies themselves, brand advocates are a valuable tool for bringing in new business. While some people will naturally be more excited about your offerings than others, you can take steps to help encourage and develop brand advocates. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

**1. Hire employees who are passionate** about your products and your mission. This enthusiasm will naturally spread to customers with which they interact.

**2. Provide great products** with desired features. It may seem obvious, but product features are the factor that advocates mention most when asked what makes them want to rave about a company.

**3. Find out what your customers are passionate about** and create promotions that drive those factors. For example, many consumers are passionate about outstanding customer service; Nordstrom and Zappos are two companies that have taken note and created exceptional customer service—and many brand advocates.

**4. Make it easy for brand advocates to cheer about you.** Provide social links on your website product pages, articles, blogs and any other content you post online.

**5. Consider offering rewards.** Acknowledging brand advocates with discounts, freebies and special services can ensure they continue spreading the word. However, proceed carefully with this since other customers may be turned off if they believe you are “paying” advocates to share their enthusiasm.

**6. Make it easy for advocates who create their own content** to share it with the world. You could create a section on your website devoted to customers who want to post photos of themselves using your products.

**7. Track and measure advocacy for your brand.** Research the best online tools to use to determine what people are saying about you, and use the information to build future promotions.

*Loyal brand advocates are more than just customers; they are actually an informal extension of your marketing department. Nurture them and watch your business score!*

*The fast Internet and cost-efficient voice solutions we get from Great Plains Communications are in tune with KHUB Radio's growing needs."*

—CHRIS WALZ, STATION MANAGER



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