

Heart and Soul

A Model for Partnership and Quality

By Terry Tuttle



The new Heart of Texas Workforce facility in Waco, Texas is a hub of activity, as it brings together businesses and over 2,800 individuals per month seeking assistance in job training, placement, and other labor related services. Formerly located in two buildings that were maximized to capacity, the 40,000 square foot Waco operation is still the center of a six county system, with satellite offices in each county. However, now the new Workforce facility houses its main operations at one site, with meeting and interview rooms, training areas, reference sources, and updated technology for fast and cost effective voice, data, and video connections. The new building is a model for the unique business relationship between four groups who optimized their expertise to develop and install an infrastructure that meets the current and future needs of the Heart of Texas Workforce organization.

Partnering together, the Heart of Texas Workforce, the Region 12 Education Service Center, Cabling and Wireless Solutions, and Dealers Electrical Supply Company, all based in Waco, worked together on the technology portion of the new Heart of Texas Workforce facility. This relationship is unique in that it teamed two state agencies, the Workforce organization and the Region 12 Education Service Center, which traditionally hadn't worked together on new construction projects.

The Role of Region 12

The Region 12 Education Service Center is one of 20 educational service centers in Texas established by the state legislature. Serving 12 counties in central Texas, Region 12 primarily accommodates the independent public school districts and chartered schools in the region to provide a wide variety of services primarily aimed at assisting educators and school districts in improving student performance. Examples of the diverse services provided include teacher and staff development training and technical assistance and training for those involved with special education programs. Region 12 also provides Internet service and technological assistance to schools within their service area.

With these diverse initiatives, how did Region 12 end up assisting on the Heart of Texas Workforce project? Anthony Billings, Operations Manager for the Heart of Texas Workforce, says, "We were familiar with Region 12 through some past interactions and were also familiar with some of the work that they have done with the school systems. We knew we had a huge undertaking with this new building, and we were very confident with their abilities. We approached them about overseeing the technology piece of the job and they accepted."

Dr. Robert Scott, the Deputy Director of Administration for Region 12, adds, "We had previously met with Anthony

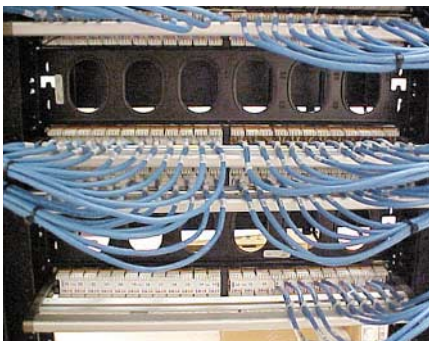


Heart of Texas Workforce facility, under construction - Waco, Texas.

Billings regarding providing Internet services to the Workforce. We currently provide Internet and E-mail services to the majority of school districts within our region and offer technology and software support services. That's when we really started talking about how the two of us, both being state entities, could pull our resources together to build our relationship."

Awarding the Project

The Heart of Texas Workforce awarded the overall technology section of the contract to Region 12. Region 12 subcontracted the cabling and IP telephone/data portions of the contract. The cabling RFP was awarded to Cabling Wireless Solutions (CWS), a turnkey telecommunications contractor, who served as a subcontractor on the job. CWS had done a remodeling project at Region 12, and the staff there was particularly pleased with both the insight and installation practices of Carlos Ancira, the Chief Operations Officer of CWS, and wanted to collaborate with him on the new Workforce building.



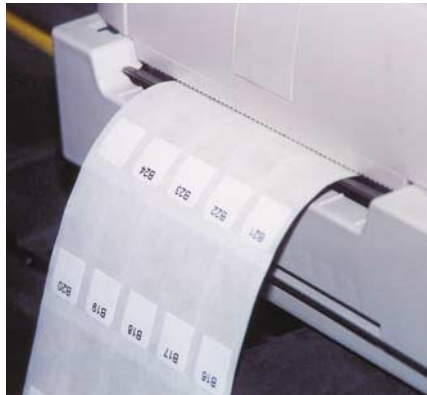
Design and build for future considerations.

Barron Rascoe, Telecommunications Specialist/Technology Services for Region 12, says, "When we were remodeling our own facility, we had some preliminary plans for what we

needed in this building. Carlos took our plans, understood our needs, and forced us to look forward. We moved into areas that we needed to move into, but we hadn't been sure of the best way to proceed. The difference in price between the two plans was so small, and now we are in a much easier position to expand, if needed. And we were extremely pleased with the quality of CWS' work."

Planning and Design

When planning the building, Billings and his team carefully considered the Workforce's technological



Clear labeling is very important.

needs in the design phase of the building and the significant amount of data that they need to transmit. "Many things that we do are connected through systems in Austin. We report a lot of information to the Texas Workforce Commission, and we also need to communicate with our satellite offices. We also knew we wanted portable video conferencing and wireless capabilities, so that all of our rooms could be multi-purpose."



GigaBand™ Category 6 patch panels, jacks and patch cords.

Rascoe and Ancira worked with Billings to carefully complete an engineering design that would support the Workforce's immediate and future requirements and then determined which manufacturers to use. The new Heart of Texas Workforce building called for 450 drops with approximately 110,000 feet of Category 5e cabling. HellermannTyton's MegaBand™ Category 5e patch panels and jacks were used.

Ancira and his staff at CWS consistently follow the TIA standards for installation procedures, and this consistency is recognized and appreciated by the customer. Ancira says, "I follow all the standards – including the fire suppression, the couplers on the EMT, the service loop requirements, the ANSI/EIA/TIA-606-A labeling standard, the punch down requirements on the back of patch panels, reporting of the testing results – all of it."

Labeling is important to Ancira, and he communicates the importance of it to his customers. When an installation is labeled according to the ANSI/EIA/TIA-606-A standard, the customer can be assured that anyone can come in later and easily make

moves, adds, or changes in a cost effective and efficient manner.

“The majority of buildings that you go into – I’m going to say eight out of ten – are mislabeled. And the ninth one is only half right. Getting the drop numbers right is important, so if you say drop number one is in a particular room that is where you’ll find



Barron Rascoe (L) and John Murphy (R) review the structured cabling installation in progress.

it. Labeling is a big process that some contractors overlook, but especially when you’re doing a voice over IP system, labeling must be correct because that drop has to be in that room for that phone. You can’t even have one mislabeled.”

Supply and Demand

Dealers Electrical Supply Company based in Waco supplied the labeling system, cabling, cable trays, connectivity, and raceway portion of the job and was another important partner in the success of this project.

The assurance of quality and longevity of the Heart of Texas Workforce job was written into the RFP (see “Constructing a Solid RFP”, page 18 of this issue), which required at least a 15-year connectivity warranty. Although many in the industry acknowledge that most new construction jobs will require updates well before most warranty deadlines,

Ancira has another perspective on the importance of warranties. “When I see a 15 to 25 year warranty, it says to me that the supplier is in it for the long haul and the product and performance will last. Plus, the customer can be assured that the project was done correctly.”

Keep the Customer Happy

Billings expressed his satisfaction with the relationship, the flow, and results of the cabling piece of the project. He says, “No doubt about it, this portion of the project was successful. The relationship that we have with Region 12 and in turn CWS and Dealers Electrical Supply Company has worked out extremely well. We are very happy.”

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