

## Hughes lifeline helps banks face lockdown challenges

Premal Gandhi, Senior Director, Hughes Communication shares how the company reacted to the lockdown and served the banks:

### **Manoj Agrawal: What role did Hughes play in business resilience and business revival of banks across the country when the lockdown started?**

**Premal Gandhi:** Both banking and telecommunication services are declared as essential services by the Government. We decided to give open bandwidth to all the bank branches so that their banking customers will not face problems in the branches.

Our expectation was that as the number of employees in the bank and the customer footfall will be less, the bandwidth consumption will not increase and might come down. But we were proved wrong and there has been a steady increase in the traffic. This proves that the banking sector has continued to evolve with its digital technology adaption unabated during the lockdown and kudos to them for that.

Banks are doing whatever possible to help the customer meet their needs. The banking fraternity has been supporting the IT vendors in all possible ways. There are several instances when the bank manager has personally come to pick up the engineers and vice versa during the tough lockdown period. The process of onboarding of new technology continued to happen even during the lockdown.

### **How has Hughes stepped up the game? Have new products been launched or have any old product been upgraded?**

I agree that banking has taken a big leap. In the last 12-18 months, we have realized that the resources, specifically the network bandwidth requirements, have gone up 3-4 times. At Hughes, we too have responded to the challenge in a positive way. We announced the launch of our High Throughput Satellite (HTS) services, and are the first private telecom operator in India to do so. These HTS services will effectively address the high bandwidth requirements at a fraction of the cost of the traditional satellite systems.

Hughes has also announced several upgraded versions of the very popular



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terrestrial HughesOn service suite which essentially provides enterprise grade high bandwidth services, leveraging multi-teleco LTE as the last mile. Hughes has also invested resources to indigenise and develop new products in areas of SD WAN, quick deployable antenna, high grade outdoor enclosed communication systems and several others.

### **How were Hughes' vendors and employees impacted by the lockdown and how did the company empower them?**

We did face challenges during the lockdown when our vendors' factories were forced to close. Anticipating such scenarios, we had stocked up, but still there was an impact of lockdown felt for couple of months. As essential services provider, the government was very supportive to our needs. Not just for us, but also for all our vendors and suppliers who support us in logistics, manufacturing, field services and maintenance.

Within Hughes, the essential functions of hub operations, field maintenance, repair center, etc, continued working right through the 2 phases of the pandemic. Our satellite and terrestrial management of technologies are adapted very well to remote access and management. This pandemic

lockdown pushed the envelope in testing all these remote access and management tools that we had invested in, and we were very happy to see that they performed with flying colours.

### **Can you describe new projects that Hughes onboarded during this time?**

We onboarded several new projects during the pandemic. The significant one is Bank of India's project for connecting over 3000 remote branches on VSATs with each site having 2 Mbps bandwidth. The scale and significance of this project for the satellite industry is very important. In fact, this is probably the largest project on VSATs in the banking segment in a single RFP. We are pleased to be awarded a majority of these branches. The bank's ATM segments have also been very active during this time. Hughes has got over 8000 ATM site connectivity orders for major banks like State Bank of India, Bank of India, Axis Bank and HDFC Bank. These are deployed under the brown label ATM model across various MSPs like Hitachi, FSS, EPS, CMS, Euronet and Diebold. There is an additional significant number of nearly 2000 ATMs sites ordered under the white label ATM by BTI and Hitachi.

### **What security features are being offered along with connectivity?**

Hughes is leveraging innovative technologies to address banking sector's demand for higher capacity access, high quality of service for real-time apps, robust network security and high-performance. When it comes to network security, the strength and scope of any solution must exceed the severity of the threat. Hughes applies AES encryption for traffic over the space link or satellite link for data security. The Hughes Jupiter modem has an inbuilt feature of MAC binding and firewall, which are supported over the VSAT link. Apart from this, external IPSEC is also established from VSAT modem to the customer DC or DR.

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