



NAVIGATING TELECOM

Challenges in School Districts:

March 2025

A SouthLight Services Case Study

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SOUTHLIGHT SERVICES

Market Leading Solutions for the \$50B POTS Crisis



SouthLight Services LLC was established to address a significant market demand in the telecommunications sector: the transition from Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS) to Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) systems.

Founded in 2024 by telecommunications professionals Tina Telson, Ash Somo, and Tera Sumner, SouthLight tackles the technical challenges that enterprises face during this technological shift. The founders' collective expertise in telecommunications architecture, network engineering, and strategic operations management forms the foundation for a scalable managed services platform.

Executive Summary

SouthLight Services aims to address the significant market demand in the telecommunications sector by transitioning from Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS) to Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) systems.

CASE STUDY

This white paper examines how school districts across the United States are facing unprecedented budgetary constraints due to reductions in Department of Education funding, while simultaneously experiencing dramatic increases in telecommunications costs. Specifically, we analyze how traditional Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS) line prices have increased 5-10 times their previous rates, creating an unsustainable burden on already strained educational budgets.

Through a detailed case study of SouthLight Services' partnership with one of Colorado's largest school districts, we demonstrate how educational institutions can modernize their telecommunications infrastructure, enhance services, and achieve significant cost savings even in an environment of fiscal austerity.

CHALLENGE

American public-school districts are operating in an increasingly challenging financial environment. Department of Education funding reductions have forced administrators to make difficult decisions about resource allocation. Essential services, including telecommunications, are under intense scrutiny as districts seek to maximize educational impact while minimizing costs.

CONCLUSION

The SouthLight Services partnership with this Colorado school district demonstrates that educational institutions can successfully navigate telecommunications challenges despite budget constraints. By embracing modern solutions, districts can not only avoid unsustainable cost increases but actually improve services while reducing overall expenditure.

As The Department of Education and state funding reductions continue to challenge school budgets, telecommunications modernization represents a critical opportunity for administrators to demonstrate fiscal responsibility while enhancing educational capabilities.



CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE FACES REGULATORY COST

DEREGULATION

- FCC Order 19-72 enables carriers to retire copper networks by 2024
- Major carriers have filed copper retirement notices in 18 states
- Businesses face mandatory migration of critical building systems

EXPONENTIAL COSTS

- Copper networks reaching end-of-life
- Maintenance costs driving carriers to accelerate retirement
- Critical systems (fire alarms, elevators, security) require immediate upgrades

AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

- POTS line costs have surged 500%+ since 2021
- Minimum service charges now exceed \$200 per line monthly. Typical POTS replacement starts at \$175 per line
- Average enterprise maintains 15-25 costly POTS lines for life-safety systems

THE POTS LINE CRISIS

Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS) lines have been the backbone of school telecommunications systems for decades, providing reliable service for administrative functions, classroom phones, emergency communications, fax machines, alarm systems, and elevator phones. However, telecommunications carriers are rapidly increasing POTS line rates as they shift focus to newer technologies:

- Many districts are experiencing price increases of 500-1000% for maintaining the same POTS services
- Carriers are reducing maintenance and support for copper-based infrastructure
- Schools face difficult decisions between absorbing unsustainable cost increases or potentially compromising safety and communication capabilities

Results: Better Service at a Lower Cost

The partnership delivered remarkable results:

- **Cost containment** with per-line costs maintained below \$40 for the entire 60-month contract term
- **Annual savings of over \$1.9 million** compared to projected POTS increases, totaling more than \$9.5 million over the contract period
- **Enhanced reliability** with 99.99% uptime compared to 98.5% with previous infrastructure
- **Improved emergency communication** capabilities
- **Simplified management** through centralized administration tools
- **Future-proofed infrastructure** with easier scaling and updates

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE FACES REGULATORY COST

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation followed a careful, phased approach to minimize disruption to school operations:

1. Comprehensive audit of existing telecommunications infrastructure
2. Development of tailored solutions for different facility requirements
3. Pilot deployment in select schools to validate performance
4. Systematic rollout across all district facilities
5. Continuous monitoring and optimization

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Colorado School District Transformation

District Profile

One of Colorado's largest school districts, serving over 90,000 students across 184 facilities, faced a critical decision when notified that their POTS line costs would increase from approximately \$45 per line to nearly \$350 per line—a 778% increase that would add over \$2.1 million annually to their telecommunications budget.

The SouthLight Services Solution

SouthLight Services partnered with the district on a 60-month contract and implemented a comprehensive telecommunications modernization strategy that:

1. **Replaced aging POTS infrastructure** with the DIGI-POTS solution designed specifically for educational environments
2. **Established triple-layer network redundancy** that exceeds NFPA requirements:
 - The primary path utilizing the school's existing WAN infrastructure
 - Secondary path via a native SIM from one of the three major U.S. carriers
 - Tertiary path through a multi-carrier SIM for catastrophic scenario backup
3. **Enhanced emergency preparedness** with 12-hour battery backup to maintain critical communications during power outages
4. **Implemented the DIGI-Blueprint platform**, providing seamless API connectivity to alarm-monitoring and elevator-monitoring companies
5. **Deployed modular architecture** that scales from 1 to 200 lines per site, with optimized Power over Ethernet (PoE) router placement to ensure optimal cellular signal strength

TECHNICAL SOLUTION DETAILS

DIGI- POTS

The SouthLight Services DIGI-POTS solution implemented for a Colorado school district represents a comprehensive approach to modernizing critical communications infrastructure:

Enhanced Emergency:

- Preparedness Triple-redundant network paths
 - Customer-provided WAN, Native SIM from top 3 US carriers, & Southlight proprietary multi-carrier SIM
 - Exceeds NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) standards
 - 12 Hour battery to manage power interruptions

Modular hardware design:

- Optimal placement of POE router for maximum cellular coverage
- Scales from 1 line to 196 lines at a single location
- Easily replace components that may fail in the future rather than replace the entire architecture.

Simplified Management and Monitoring:

- DIGI-Blueprint platform offering comprehensive visibility of all communication systems
- API connectivity to third-party alarm monitoring and elevator monitoring vendors.

