

Case study

# Valvoline oil change locations use cellular for hybrid WAN and service with a last mile



**ERICSSON**



Image courtesy of Getty Image

# At franchise stores, Henley Enterprises uses cellular-enabled routers for constant connectivity

**Customer:**  
Henley Enterprises /  
Valvoline Instant Oil

**Industry:**  
Retail

**Use Case:**  
Hybrid WAN

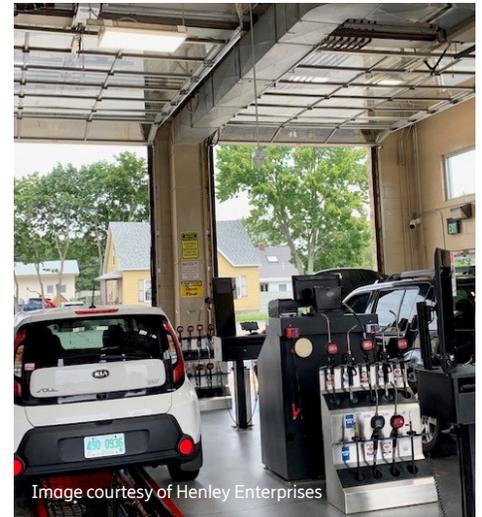
## Success story highlights

**Challenge** — The hundreds of digitally transformed Valvoline Instant Oil Change locations run by franchisee Henley Enterprises can't function without wide-area network (WAN) connectivity — and outages were occurring too often for comfort. Downtime crippled essential functions such as the ability to accept credit card payments, and Henley sought ways to avoid relying solely on wired broadband.

**Solution** — Henley Enterprises deployed Ericsson's enterprise wireless solutions in

each of its locations. These all-in-one hybrid WAN routers support cellular and wired connectivity and include Wi-Fi, a zone-based firewall, and extensive cloud-based network and security management features and integrations.

**Benefits** — This solution featuring multi-WAN flexibility with built-in cellular connectivity has helped Henley Enterprises squelch network downtime and streamline IT operations across its considerable footprint of Valvoline service centers — creating marked cost savings and new efficiencies while bolstering the customer experience.



“We’ve had great success utilizing cellular as our primary internet connection for Valvoline Instant Oil Change businesses in areas where high-speed wired broadband is scarce, and we’d like to increase our reach with 5G.”

**Robert Reeder**, CIO, Valvoline Instant Oil Change franchisee Henley Enterprises

## Background and challenges

Henley Enterprises is the largest Valvoline Instant Oil Change franchise in the U.S., with more than 225 locations in 10 states, providing services such as 15-minute oil changes, battery maintenance, and tire rotations. Each location is outfitted with technologies requiring always-on connectivity — including IP phones, time clocks, and a point-of-sale (POS) system. These centers can also have as many as 20 or more video cameras, used for training, employee safety, and customer satisfaction.

With this many technologies serving valuable purposes — and an IT team comprising just a few people — internet access can't go down. But Henley's widely distributed footprint was presenting challenges related to network connectivity and management.

### Effects of network downtime and lag in stores

The team at Henley observed that recurring outages throughout its many stores were driving up wait times, resulting in too many negative

customer reviews and hindering profitability. The short- and long-term financial impact was deemed unacceptable.

### Insufficient wired broadband options in some areas

Some regions and states have internet infrastructure challenges ranging from exorbitant installation and monthly costs to bandwidth limitations and untenable network congestion.

“You really have to think about alternative ways to get the internet ready to use at each location. Also, we require every store to have at least two paths to the internet. Sometimes that might require two cellular links,” Reeder said.

### Limitations of highly manual deployment and ongoing management

Henley realized that whatever edge routers they decided to install would only be as useful as the network management tools underlying them. The organization's lean IT team needed a platform that would allow them to not only launch secure WAN access at every site,



Image courtesy of Henley Enterprises

but also adjust connection configurations, push out security updates, and add third-party integrations without visiting each site in person or consistently paying third-party contractors.

“For a while there, probably 60% of our IT department’s time was spent dealing with stores that had internet outages,” Reeder said.

“We’ve opened at least a dozen service center locations with cellular through Ericsson Cradlepoint routers. In the past a store opening might be delayed while waiting for the internet to come. But now we can give the employees the connectivity they need right away.”

**Robert Reeder**, CIO, Valvoline Instant Oil Change franchisee Henley Enterprises

## Solutions

“I knew if we were going to grow, we couldn’t rely solely on landlines and DSL,” Reeder said. “And I knew from experience that cellular broadband was a good alternative, and in some cases could be the primary mode for accessing the internet from one of these service centers, so we wanted to try it out.”

Henley’s search for a flexible multi-WAN router led the company to Ericsson Enterprise Wireless Solutions. The company deployed Ericsson Cradlepoint routers in more than 200 Valvoline Instant Oil Change centers. These hybrid WAN routers support cellular and wired broadband for WAN and ethernet and Wi-Fi for LAN, all major routing protocols, and include a built-in firewall.

Connectivity and security are tracked and controlled from anywhere by Henley’s IT team via Ericsson Cradlepoint’s sophisticated yet easy-to-use dashboards and point-and-click configuration tools.

“Ericsson Cradlepoint routers and NetCloud features were exactly what we needed to keep our stores running — all delivered in a nice package, as a commodity that any store can have,” Reeder said.

## Benefits

### Cloud-managed WAN flexibility

Ericsson Cradlepoint routers enable the IT team to confidently use cellular as either the primary or secondary link, depending on variables related to network availability, performance, and costs at each location.

“A portion of the credit for our company’s revenue growth goes to Ericsson, because our stores have been able to confidently institute new technologies and programs knowing that they’re always going to be online serving customers.”

**Robert Reeder**, CIO, Valvoline Instant Oil Change franchisee Henley Enterprises

With 99.99% uptime, the team keeps its payment systems and other devices and applications running all day, with much more throughput and, ultimately, greater customer satisfaction.

“We’ve had great success utilizing cellular as our primary internet connection for Valvoline Instant Oil Change businesses in areas where high-speed wired broadband is scarce, and we’d like to increase our reach with 5G,” Reeder said.

### Affordable monthly billing through pooled plans

Henley worked with a nationwide cellular network operator to set up a pooled data plan for the company’s entire footprint of widely distributed routers. With some locations running cellular as the primary WAN link and others using it for failover, the company can standardize and minimize costs while maintaining the flexibility that’s unique to Wireless WAN.

### Day-1 connectivity for new stores

When a soon-to-open store is in a location where wired broadband installation is delayed, Henley’s IT team gets on-site staff connected

“When we are setting up our WAN within a service center, we know if that internet connection goes down, we can’t charge credit cards. Staff can’t check in on the time clock. So for us, the critical factor in a store is keeping that internet connection up as close to 100% as possible, and also with some kind of reasonable bandwidth.”

**Robert Reeder**, CIO, Valvoline Instant Oil Change franchisee Henley Enterprises

immediately through Wireless WAN. Plug-and-play routers enable the day-1 connectivity necessary to stay on schedule.

#### **IT control from anywhere**

Henley utilizes Ericsson NetCloud for centralized visibility into network downtime and performance data and then acts upon that data through point-and-click functionality as soon as a critical need arises — usually without a truck roll. Tasks such as routing, IP addressing, and VPN adjustments can be handled in minutes instead of days or months.

Beyond the WAN, NetCloud also enables the IT team to remotely view and control many of the devices that operate on the LAN.

“When I saw what our IT team could do through Ericsson NetCloud, I was like, ‘OK, that’s it. This is a self-serve product.’ That really was a big seller for me,” Reeder said.

#### **Ability to scale with 5G as needed**

With Ericsson, adding 5G will be a straightforward process at any time, which is good news for a company that continues to expand and evolve.

“The performance of 5G will improve our high-definition video streaming capabilities, resulting in a safer working environment for our staff and more efficient customer service,” Reeder said.

Learn more at [cradlepoint.com](https://www.cradlepoint.com)

