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## Case Study: Blue Plate Catering

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Blue Plate Catering is Chicago's premier, award-winning catering company, and Chicago's first Green Certified Caterer with over 30 years experience and leadership in the hospitality industry. Founded by CEO Jim Horan, Blue Plate reflects Jim's pride in personal relationships, belief in hard work and, most importantly, a dedication to and appreciation for the craft of food. As an award-winning business, Blue Plate quickly outgrew its space and, in 2016, made the move into an 80,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility, Larkin Hall in Chicago's West Loop Fulton Market District, moving 200 employees over the course of two months while still maintaining business

activities during their busiest season. Minimizing downtime while maximizing uptime was a top priority.

Fulton May Solutions, a comprehensive IT company, has been managing Blue Plate's technical support for over three years, performing maintenance, monitoring and full managed IT support. When Blue Plate decided to move their operations to a new facility, they trusted Fulton May with planning and carrying out the project of moving the company's infrastructure. It was a complex process that took place during one of Blue Plate's busiest seasons, and was met with several unforeseen challenges. Fulton May was able to get their new system up and running quickly and effectively, which is why they continue as Blue Plate's trusted technology partner today.



## Planning and Collaboration

Early on, Fulton May's senior engineers collaborated with Cisco to determine the best way to set up a technology infrastructure while maintaining network best practices. They planned the optimal locations for wireless access points, MDF and IDF network closets, and intricate cabling solutions. Fulton May coordinated and executed the installation of the necessary low voltage cabling and other network requirements. They also designed the size and layout of the server room, determined the number of server racks necessary, and planned a redundant power solution to avoid any sudden outages.



Upon assessing the company's existing infrastructure in the old building, Fulton May helped Blue Plate Catering make the decision not to move any of the old network equipment to the new office, and take only the servers themselves. For this reason, designing a scalable network infrastructure for the new building involved future proofing and anticipating business growth. This cloud-based system provided more flexibility, manageability and security in terms of growth for the business.

## The Challenge of Full Network Coverage

A priority for Blue Plate Catering was having network coverage throughout the entire facility. They wanted the freedom to move through different areas of the building without being interrupted by gaps in wireless network coverage. This was a challenge, as the company was transitioning from a 10,000-square foot space into an 80,000-square foot, three-story headquarters in the west loop of Chicago. Another challenge with consistent wireless coverage was that the facility contained many walk-in freezers and refrigerators with temperatures that reached as low as 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Despite these challenges Fulton May worked to set up a network that gave Blue Plate Catering the continual wireless access they needed.

## Staying Connected During Transition

Delays in construction and factors pushing them out of their old office put a strict timeline on the transition, and they ended up having to move 20% of Blue Plate's workers into the new building before it was ready. Fulton May was faced with the challenge of quickly coordinating a temporary network and getting it up and

running until the planned infrastructure could be completed. As the fiber internet line was not yet fully installed, they had to work with installers to set up a temporary network while the primary internet system was finished. With business now being conducted from two different physical spaces, Fulton May had to set up a temporary solution that allowed users in both locations to be in communication with one another.

The actual physical movement of the server infrastructure took place on a Friday afternoon, with Fulton May overseeing and planning this entire project they were able to finish this move well ahead of schedule and have Blue Plate up and running by the very next day with minimal disruption. During the move, Fulton May also replaced the traditional phone system with a new voice-over IP system that could provide better service for customers and allow for greater flexibility.

### **Ongoing Technical Support**

Fulton May continues to function as Blue Plate Catering's IT department, responding to ongoing calls, questions, all while providing 24/7/365 monitoring and maintenance. With the new improved infrastructure put into place, Fulton May Solutions now has Blue Plate Catering operating at its most efficient level yet.

