

Blazing, reliable 5G mobility and a fleet solution that delivers



Business needs

Tools to support a busy workforce across multiple locations in two states

Networking solution

AT&T connectivity, cell phones, and fleet management services optimize operations for the growing company

Business value

Outstanding customer support, enhanced staff efficiency

Industry focus

Home improvement

Size

25 locations and growing

About Helm Paint and Decorating

Helm Paint and Decorating began as a single paint and supply store in New Orleans, opened by Bunky Helm in 1970. Today a third generation of the Helm family manages 25 locations in Louisiana and Texas. The stores serve their communities well with a variety of home decor and interior design services, wall coverings and window treatments, and accessories.

The situation

Employees at Helm Paint and Decorating experienced service problems and coverage issues with their existing carrier. In addition to seeking a new carrier, company officials looked to simplify vehicle maintenance and tracking.

Solution

Helm Paint and Decorating already trusted AT&T Business to provide internet connectivity for its locations. The company's positive experience with AT&T Dedicated Internet Service convinced officials to turn to AT&T Business to help address the problems with employees' business phones and internet service. AT&T Business helped their mobile phone problems by delivering its fast 5G¹ service to new compatible 5G devices, and optimized company vehicle operations with AT&T Fleet Complete.

¹AT&T 5G requires a compatible plan and is not avail. everywhere. See att.com/5Gforyou for details

A trusted partner in paint and decorating

More than five decades after Bunky Helm started his company, Helm Paint and Decorating continues to thrive. The Helm family and its staff continue to do much more than sell paint—they offer solutions, expertise, and personal service to every customer. As a result, Helm Paint and Decorating has become a trusted partner for professional contractors, decorators, and do-it-yourself enthusiasts.

By the age of 10, Joe Helm had begun working in the family business in New Orleans. He would stock shelves and do whatever else needed to be done. It wasn't always the plan for him to join his father in the business. Joe earned a master's degree in marketing and considered other opportunities. However, he realized he could build on the successful business his father had started.

"I had a clear vision of where we could take my father's company, and I joined the business in 1994," Helm said. Within a year his father was diagnosed with a serious illness, which claimed his life in 1997. Helm is grateful that he was able to work alongside his father. "I do have faith, but I believe it's fate that I was able to learn from him, and when he got sick in 1995, I was able to help take the business on a new exciting path."

Creating value for customers

Today Helm is an owner and general manager of the growing company, which now includes his siblings, wife, two sons, a niece and nephew, cousins, and in-laws. The company has expanded to 25 locations in Louisiana and Texas, with plans for three new stores. "It's a family affair and it's great to be involved in the communities we serve with the family," he said.

Some family members moved to Texas to launch and operate new stores in Dallas and Fort Worth. "Our business is creating value for the customer," Helm said. "Our success depends on doing things better than the next paint company. We want to be the best in the industry."

Helm Paint and Decorating focuses on offering good products and creating value every day for its customers. "Our competitive advantage is our customer service and our technical understanding of paint, coatings, and related products," Helm said. "Technical knowledge like color matching in our business is extremely important. It requires a lot of training and a lot of experience."

The company keeps databases and meticulous written records of customer purchases to color-match and track

formulas. This is important for people who may have painted their house 25 years ago but can't remember the name of the color when they want to repaint. "Typically, if you bought that paint from us, we can go back and find the color of your house," Helm said. "Service like that keeps customers coming back."



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Joe Helm
Owner and General Manager, Helm Paint and Decorating

Outstanding customer care also involves delivering orders in less than two hours, whether the order involves hundreds of gallons for a commercial contractor or a quart for a family's breakfast nook. "I think just keeping the customer in focus and being customer-centric at all times creates value for anybody walking in here," Helm said.

Helm Paint and Decorating works to provide amenities that big box stores often don't. "We deal a little bit closer with our customer," Helm said. "And our owners, including me, talk with customers every day so that we understand their wants and needs and how we can serve them better. We want to make every customer feel special. My family obviously can't be everywhere, so the fact that we've managed to have staff who care like we do and extend our values makes me the proudest."



Quick and reliable services

The Helm enterprise relies heavily on technology. “It’s about the customer,” Helm said. “If somebody calls the store, and I can’t pick up the phone very quickly or get back in touch right away, I may lose that sale. They’re going to call somebody else.”

A few years ago, Helm Paint and Decorating experienced problems with the internet connectivity that supported the stores’ point of sale (POS) systems. “We had a lot of service issues, and when the POS goes down, we can’t look up pricing or accounts, so we can’t get the information we need. It really halts the day, and we’re not going to be able to deliver the services we need to.”

A little research led Helm to AT&T Business. “We made the switch over to AT&T Dedicated Internet,” Helm said. “The dedicated fiber has been phenomenal. The service is quick. And we don’t have problems pulling up our database or suffer from communication issues. I think that’s the biggest thing.” Staff also appreciate the dependability. “AT&T is very reliable,” he said.

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Joe Helm
Owner and General Manager, Helm Paint and Decorating

Increased efficiency, lower costs

More recently the mobile phones Helm’s 25-member outside sales force uses to assist customers were not always up to the company’s standards. “We used another carrier and we had communication problems,” Helm said. “Sometimes we couldn’t get calls and sometimes calls wouldn’t even go to voicemail. We also had issues with texting that created problems getting orders. And on top of that, they were charging us a lot for the services.”



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Joe Helm
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Even though the service was unreliable, staff initially weren’t certain that moving to another carrier was a good idea. “They were concerned about the change at first, but my staff is inquisitive,” Helm said. “They went to find information and talk to friends, then came back and said they were excited about the change. When we started talking about AT&T, everybody felt comfortable.”

Helm again reached out to AT&T Business. “I did the research and met with a representative,” Helm said. “He fielded the questions very well, and we were able to cut costs, improve efficiency, and get better services with AT&T.”²

After helping the Louisiana-based staff manage the change-over, Helm’s AT&T Business rep flew to Dallas to help the

Texas staff. “He got everybody locked in,” Helm said. “It was an incredible change that happened very rapidly. The transition was very smooth. And he had answers. A lot of times when I get involved with people with different services, I don’t get good answers. So, you’ve got to find the right vendors, and AT&T Business was the right vendor.”

The company has always been careful to safeguard customer information, so Helm appreciates the security of his AT&T solutions. “We want to protect our customer base and their credit cards and other information,” he said. “The research that I did on AT&T shows that it has a very secure network. The proof really is in the pudding—we haven’t had any issues.”

Continuing the founder’s vision

Helm Paint and Decorating relies on another AT&T Business service to meet its high customer care standards: AT&T Fleet Complete, an advanced fleet management platform to manage operations.

Using AT&T Fleet Complete’s cloud-based platform, Helm can locate the company’s vehicles on a map and identify the nearest team member to make a delivery, facilitating their goal of delivering orders within two hours. “When they order from us, we act quickly to get it out to their job site. We have to know where our vehicles are and be able to move those vehicles in a timely and efficient manner,” Helm said. “If you can’t get the delivery out to the job within two hours, you lose that sale.”

AT&T Fleet Complete helps Helm Paint and Decorating maximize productivity, improve public and driver safety, lower insurance premiums, and better protect its assets. The company saw great value in the insights the solution could derive from its 30-vehicle fleet.

“Technology is extremely important to our company from database to delivery,” Helm said. “AT&T Business has played a part in that. Our phone services and Fleet Complete let us know where our vehicles are so that we’re more efficient.”

Helm Paint and Decorating’s operations are a testament to the vision and hard work of the founder and the enduring values that continue to create lifelong customers.

² AT&T service quality varies based on many factors, including location. Results may not be typical.