



*“By using the Shell CoolBand network by MegaPath, we’re actually able to cut expenses while improving our store efficiency and morphing into a more customer-centric business.”*

— Mary B. Lyden, CIO, Truenorth

## MegaPath Helps Shell Operator, Truenorth, Shift Gears from Fuel Sales to Convenience Retail

Truenorth Energy, LLC, a joint venture between Shell Oil and the Lyden family, has become one of the largest Shell oil marketers in the country, providing consumers with quality fuel through its network of more than 220 service stations in Ohio and Michigan. Since 1999 Truenorth has established itself as one of the leaders in fuel retail, and today is expanding its strategic focus from gasoline retail to encompass the thriving convenience store industry.

One critical component to this strategic transformation is the Shell CoolBand network, provided by MegaPath. The Shell CoolBand network combines private transport of payment card processing with MegaPath’s high-speed Internet access, managed security, and MPLS virtual private network (VPN). MegaPath’s Shell CoolBand solution is enabling Truenorth to enhance the speed and efficiency of communications across its new business strategy.

### Truenorth rises to meet today’s business challenges

“There are two dynamics at work in today’s retail fuel environment,” says Mary B. Lyden, CIO for Truenorth. “First, the reality is that while gasoline prices are high, margins are declining. Our core business is simply not as profitable as it used to be. Second, even though we provide an indispensable product to our customers, we needed something more to strengthen our relationship with them.

“In response,” she continues, “we recognized that Truenorth had to address both of these realities by providing more than just gasoline.” By expanding Truenorth’s services into a customer-focused convenience store experience, the company found a way to address both challenges.

However, in the fast-paced, high-touch convenience retail arena, Lyden says, “We knew that we needed new communications capabilities to allow our operations to be more efficient, to free up people and other resources to focus on creating a great in-store customer experience. That’s why we looked to MegaPath and its Shell CoolBand solution.”



### Company

Truenorth

### Industry

Fuel and convenience retail

### The Challenge

**To help an established service station chain evolve into a thriving convenience store operation by connecting its stations onto a single high-performance IP communications network.**

### The Solution

**Truenorth deployed MegaPath’s Shell CoolBand network, which combines the following MegaPath services with private transport to Shell for payment card processing:**

- Internet Access
- Site-to-Site MPLS VPN
- Dial Back-up
- Managed Firewall
- Anti-Virus
- Intrusion Prevention

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## A new network delivers full-throttle benefits

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Truenorth chose MegaPath's Shell CoolBand offering to provide secure, high-speed connectivity for its stores, and to enable a host of operational efficiencies and inter-store communication improvements. Of Truenorth's 107 service stations on the CoolBand network, about two-thirds are running on MegaPath DSL and the rest are utilizing MegaPath satellite. "Our previous combination of dial-up for back-office applications and satellite for credit processing was, unfortunately, both slow and expensive. With CoolBand, we found a solution that is faster, more secure, and less expensive," Lyden says.

By deploying MegaPath's single high-speed CoolBand network for both credit card processing and application connectivity, Truenorth immediately eliminated the need for its credit-processing satellite service and is gradually eliminating its redundant dial-up connections as applications are migrated to the network. This is resulting in significant cost savings for the company. "Our dial-up long distance charges had previously been one of our most aggravating expenses," Lyden says.

Once the additional applications are fully migrated, Truenorth's CoolBand network is expected to run all of the following: POS systems, credit/debit card processing, ATM, security cameras, tank monitoring, lottery, email, and HR applications. This will allow store managers and executives to access comprehensive store information directly through the single high-speed network.

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## Increased storefront visibility and customer intelligence

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Increased connectivity between headquarters and the retail stores is allowing Truenorth to shift greater business responsibility to individual storefronts, while improving customer intelligence across the board. Lyden says, "The roadside marketplace is about more than just gasoline. We can only be competitive within this new business arena by having immediate access to customer information. Over our MegaPath network we will be able to quickly find out the details of our customers' relationships with us, such as whether they buy a coffee and newspaper when they fill up their tank, or a coffee and doughnut. In this way, we will get to know our customers better than ever, and serve their needs more effectively."

Lyden sums up, "In an evolving marketplace it's imperative for us to know our clientele beyond a simple customer count, and to keep close tabs on all areas of our business. Consolidating communication through MegaPath's Shell CoolBand network gives Truenorth the freedom to obtain the information and to improve decision-making, and ultimately will help us accomplish our long-term strategic goals."

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## The Benefits

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**Truenorth was able to consolidate and simplify inter-store communications, realizing significant cost savings and improving operational efficiencies and customer intelligence.**