

CASE STUDY

RESPONDING TO SEISMIC CHANGES IN RETAIL SECTOR BY CREATING A DYNAMIC, DIGITAL EXPERIENCES



Decathlon is one of the world's largest sports retailers, founded in France in 1976, it now boasts operations in 53 countries.

The business has tended to favour huge, edge-of-town superstores, but it is adjusting its strategy in the face of seismic changes to the retail sector. It has not abandoned its mega-stores, but, as consumers switch to online channels, Decathlon UK is scaling back its superstore expansion in favour of smaller outlets on busy highstreets. Rather than displaying every item, these smaller stores will act as inspiration for a sporty lifestyle. Overall, the Decathlon store experience is becoming more digital, more dynamic and more engaging.

Seamless mobility and omnipresent wireless coverage will be standard across all Decathlon UK stores. With the UK flagship store in Surrey Quays, London, due for a major refurbishment, the business wanted to have a solution in place ahead of a June 2018 reopening.

"Opening the flagship with an old network vision was unthinkable," says Laurent Briffaud, head of IT, Decathlon UK.



ZERO-TOUCH DEPLOYMENT TO ENSURE MINIMAL DISRUPTION TO TRADING

The Aruba solution has been built around the Aruba AP-315 802.11ac Wave 2 Instant Access Points, Aruba 2930F Campus Edge Switches, ClearPass for network access control, and ArubaOS 8, providing intelligent automation features. It delivers a solution that allows zero-touch deployment and is quick to enable. Also, it ensures minimal disruption to store environ-

REQUIREMENTS

- Ensure network access throughout the four-floor UK flagship and head office
- Simplify access for different user groups, including staff, customers and service providers
- Support digital transformation of retail sector

SOLUTION

- 802.11ac Aruba wireless Access Points
- Aruba 2930 Campus Edge Switches
- ArubaOS 8
- Aruba Central

OUTCOMES

- Improves the customer shopping experience, allowing Decathlon to blend digital and instore retail
- Mobile App with instore wayfinding, multiple languages and seamless payment capabilities
- High-performance network across 8,400sqm of retail space at UK flagship
- Secure, role-based access and consistent experience for staff, customers, service providers and IoT
- Provision of the data to inform a future retail strategy

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LAURENT BRIFFAUD
HEAD OF IT, DECATHLON UK

ments. The monitoring and management of the infrastructure is carried out on the Aruba cloud-based platform, Central.

Decathlon Group considered two options, Aruba and another key competitor. Briffaud says the opening of the UK flagship meant his decision was more pressing:

“We needed to make a decision and we chose Aruba even though this was a deviation from the Decathlon Group

strategy. The Aruba solution can be managed centrally, it is cloud-first and quick to roll-out. There was minimum risk to the project. The quality of the Aruba architecture is excellent.”

Seamless mobility throughout every Decathlon store

The Surrey Quays flagship store reopened in June 2018, doubling in size with 8,400sqm of retail space across four floors. The site includes a rooftop multi-sports playing field, golf simulators, a mini badminton course, mini golf course and bike testing stations. An on-site mini aquarium allows customers to try out snorkelling equipment.

All 150 floor staff work from tablets or mobile devices. They can check stock, find an item in another store or show instructional videos. Devices can be shared, with users logging in through a unique profile.



The network also supports building management systems, car park security and payments, instore digital signage and access controls.

In addition, the site includes Decathlon’s UK head office. More than 150 staff now enjoy seamless mobility throughout the office. Visitors to the head office are onboarded to the network through ClearPass.

“The flagship store is not our ‘innovation’ showcase,” says Briffaud. “We will use different stores to explore different initiatives, but the smaller sites will deliver the same flagship store experience. It’s just going to be smaller.”

Creating a fluid retail experience

Briffaud says the Decathlon app will be an increasingly significant part of the Decathlon retail experience. Customers can use it to browse and buy 50,000 items of stock remotely (by comparison, the Surrey Quays store houses 13,000 articles), but it will also be synced to the instore experience. Wayfinding will lead customers directly to an item (a useful feature in the huge stores), there will be multi-language functionality, and

customers will be able to buy directly while on the shop floor and have their article delivered to their home within two hours.

“Eventually we want our sales assistants to be able to process transactions from their tablets on the shop floor, and we are also trialling RFID tags and in-app mobile payment to allow self-checkout,” he says. “We want the shopping experience to be as fluid as possible.”

Secure, adaptable and easy to manage

According to Laurent Briffaud, the deployment was easier to manage and Aruba ClearPass simplifies the task of managing multiple network access rights based on the roles of people, devices and things, allowing for a far simpler, more easily managed, yet more secure network architecture. This is critical operational value in the competitive retail sector.

“Unfortunately, my senior network engineer left not long after installation, which might have been a concern. It took us four months to find his replacement and, in that time, we had zero issues with the Aruba network.”

ClearPass, he continues, is not only an IT benefit but also delivers business value. “What I want from my network access control is transparency. ClearPass can show the business that we are both secure and adaptable. That’s the value the business wants from our IT.”

THE DATA AND INSIGHT TO INFORM FUTURE RETAIL

These digital touchpoints will also generate the data to better inform future retail strategy, from optimising store layouts to understanding consumer demographics. It will make it easier for Decathlon to test new ideas – from merchandising to promotions, and then quickly assessing the impact.

“It will be far easier to analyse the customer journey,” says Briffaud.

The plan is then to roll-out the Aruba solution to other UK stores. Smaller stores are 20% the size of the Surrey Quays flagship, but they will bring retail excitement to the high street.

“We will have the same features and functionality in every store,” says Briffaud.

It should also create a more dynamic and engaging retail experience for customers, establishing a Decathlon point of difference over traditional sports retailers. In a world of Zwift cycling groups, Mirror fitness classes, and Apple Watch health monitoring, modern Decathlon stores will better reflect the connected consumer. The network is everything.

“A retailer with no network is like a car with no tyres,” says Briffaud.