Case Study: Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City

Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City Improves Guest Wi-Fi Coverage and Performance with Aruba Wireless Solutions

For a hotel geared towards business travelers, Rushdy Mubarak knew that fast, easy and reliable connectivity was high on the list of expectations for his hotel's guests.

"It is our Group's policy to offer complimentary Wi-Fi connectivity and, with typical business travelers bringing anywhere between one to five wireless devices, we needed a solution that could cope with growing demands over the next five years," said Rushdy, IT Manager at Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City.

802.11ac Technology a Clear Way Forward

REQUIREMENTS

- Reliable high speed coverage across entire property

- Support for high density of simultaneous connections

- Ability to meet Wi-Fi expectations for the next 5 years

SOLUTION

- 802.11ac and 802.11n Indoor & Outdoor APs

- 7200 Series Mobility Controllers

- AirWave for network management

BENEFITS

- Improvement in rating of Wi-Fi services from 7 to over 9, on a scale of 10, in guest feedback system.

- 90 to 95 percent reduction in volume of IT help desk calls.

- Simplified and centralized AP management, monitoring and troubleshooting.

- AP design blends seamlessly with hotel aesthetics.

Based on guest feedback received via its "Medallia" guest survey, the hotel realized that it needed to upgrade its wireless network in terms of both performance and coverage. But its incumbent technology provider did not provide 802.11ac solutions, which Rushdy knew would be needed to future-proof the new wireless deployment.

Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, and Ruckus Wireless, both of which were approved vendors for the Group, were evaluated. It was Aruba's impressive list of references across the Middle East and beyond, particularly in the hospitality industry, that led to its selection.

"We did our due diligence and were guided by Aruba's local partner, EMW who assured us that Aruba would offer the best solution in terms of performance, simplicity, manageability and security," said Rushdy.

Planning for Success

Aruba is a clear choice for the hospitality domain.

RUSHDY MUBARAK, *IT MANAGER AT RADISSON BLU HOTEL, DUBAI MEDIA CITY*

Aruba's team of network professionals conducted a detailed site survey and determined that while 802.11ac solutions would be required to support high density environments such as meeting rooms and public areas, its 802.11n solutions would be sufficient for coverage in guest rooms.

"Our two outdoor terraces, alone, regularly host up to 200 and 400 people respectively so the solution had to be capable of managing high volumes of simultaneous connections. We had also upgraded our core switches the previous year and were keen for this enhancement to be reflected on our wireless network," said Rushdy.

A blend of the best solutions provides the perfect mix

While Rushdy and his IT team were eager to have the latest technology deployed, Aruba determined that its high performance 802.11n APs would be sufficient for coverage of the rooms. This meant the hotel could meet guests' demands for a reasonable cost.

Aruba's 275 Outdoor APs were selected for the outdoor areas, as they provided impressive wide-area coverage, while Aruba 225 and Aruba 205 APs were chosen for the meeting rooms. To provide the highest level of service, 802.11ac coverage was extended to the suites while the Aruba 103H Hospitality AP was selected for the remaining rooms.

To simplify manageability of the new network, two Aruba 7210 mobility controllers and Aruba's AirWave network management platform were also selected for the deployment.

Upgrading Infrastructure Without Disturbing Guests

As a leading brand in the heart of Dubai's commercial district, the hotel enjoys high occupancy rates. Despite this, it was essential for the rollout of the wireless infrastructure to be carried without any inconvenience to hotel guests.

"We planned to install APs in each of the rooms and intended during the interim to operate the new wireless network in parallel with our old solution," said Rushdy. Our biggest concern was not to disrupt or diminish the quality of service for our guests."

A generous timeframe of three months was set for the deployment. Aruba's implementation partner EMW meticulously planned the deployment around predicted occupancy patterns.

Plug and play solutions lead to seamless integration

While the installation of APs in the public areas was easily executed during the late hours of the night, the guest rooms presented more of a challenge. However, the plug and play nature of Aruba's APs greatly sped up the process.

"Not only were the APs convenient for installation, their design blended in perfectly with the aesthetics of our rooms," noted Rushdy. The use of Aruba's mobility controllers meant all the APs could be centrally configured, which further simplified their deployment.

Overall, the implementation proceeded without a hitch which was testament to the ease-of-use of Aruba's solutions and the expertise of EMW. Rushdy said, "We had no technology related issues. And because of proper planning the deployment was seamlessly executed."

Guest Satisfaction Instantly Rises

The positive impact that the new solution had on guests was instantly noticeable. This was reflected in the feedback received via the 'Medallia' survey, which saw ratings for Wi-Fi connectivity improve from 7 to above 9, on a scale of 10.

"We also noted better reviews being posted on sites such as TripAdvisor, which is essential to attracting new patrons to our hotel," said Rushdy. "We see this itself as being as justification of the project, as it directly impacts our revenues."

Most importantly, since completion of the project, the IT team no longer receives complaints relating to poor coverage. "We have seen a 90 to 95 percent reduction in the number of help desk calls," said Rushdy. Furthermore, the few remaining issues are now non-technical and therefore easily resolved."

Aruba's solutions a blessing for the IT team

The project has entailed a number of benefits for the IT team as well. The mobility controllers have eliminated the need to manually configure and manage APs. They have also provided a range of impressive security features including secure authentication, encryption, VPN connections, and wireless intrusion protection.

AirWave has helped optimize Wi-Fi performance and now gives the IT team granular visibility into each AP, including real-time and historical connection information. According to Rushdy, this "makes monitoring and tracking a breeze, and enables his team to preempt issues."

Confidence for the Future

Central to the success of the Aruba deployment was its ability to meet the hotel's demands for the next five years. And Rushdy is quick to point out that even a 200% increase in bandwidth would not 'max out' the APs.

"We intend to increase the capacity of our leased line next year and are confident that the solution will be able to translate the benefits of this capacity increase over to our Wi-Fi users," he said. The hotel has also purchased licenses that would enable it to deploy up to 250 additional APs should the need arise.

Commenting on his overall satisfaction with the deployment, Rushdy concluded, "Aruba is a clear choice of technology provider for the hospitality domain. Their solutions perfectly address all Wi-Fi challenges and enable us to consistently deliver the highest performance and reliability. With this becoming an essential service to business and leisure travelers alike, it gives us a competitive edge."

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