Northwest Shopping Center

Aerohive Wi-Fi solution delivers invaluable customer insights and identifies shopper preferences

About Northwest Shopping Center

The NorthWest Shopping Centre in Auckland, New Zealand, is being heralded as the next generation of shopping centre in both design and retail offering. Owned and managed by Stride Property, the centre is at the heart of the new Westgate Town Centre and is a part of Auckland's Northwest Transformation, the largest transformation project in the country. The centre's 27,000m² area includes almost 100 retail stores, a contemporary food court and landscaped spaces reflecting the region's natural surroundings. The centre opened in October 2015, serves around 475,000 people living within a 15-minute drive, and is designed to anticipate growth in the fast expanding region.

The Challenge

In the highly competitive world of retail, shopping centres are constantly seeking ways to understand the shopper preferences and purchasing habits in order to offer better customer experiences. For Linh Luong, Senior Marketing Manager for Stride Property, building the NorthWest Shopping Centre afforded the opportunity to use the latest communications technology to provide a competitive edge over rivals. NorthWest decided to also offer their customers a better experience by offering easy access to the internet via a free public Wi-Fi network. "The business requirement was to ensure that customers have easy, seamless access to the internet. Competing retail centres in the same catchment area offer poor access with many limitations in what customers can do. Customers are really savvy these days and they have an expectation of free Wi-Fi when they go shopping," added Ms Luong. Together with ease of use and total reliability, the technology also had to match the aesthetics of the centre with a certain design flair—the architect forbid any ugly antennae.

The Solution

Stride Property employed Intellium Technology, a highly regarded full-service ICT provider, to build the network based on an Aerohive Wi-Fi solution. As a "greenfield" site, the shopping centre posed unique challenges for Mark Taylor, Sales Director at Intellium. "It was a large and complex project that required liaison with the architect, contractors, electricians, data cabling people, and infrastructure providers," said Mr Taylor. "Intellium and Aerohive were chosen because we both have a track record of delivering projects that meet the highest expectations of the client, in terms of user experience and network reliability. Aerohive is recognised and known as a high quality, good value solution." The system covers all common areas such as food courts. Fourteen Aerohive Access Points (AP230) are cabled to multiple Power of Ethernet (PoE) switches. The APs access the internet via a fully managed fibre circuit provided by Intellium, enabling end to end visibility for efficient fault resolution. The Wi-Fi network has unlimited data transit at a fixed price, protected by a hosted firewall. The APs are managed remotely through Aerohive's "Hivemanager Online" (HMOL) software. Euclid retail analytics collect shopper data from the Aerohive software which is presented to the client via the online Euclid portal. Aerohive's software on the Wi-Fi network offered Intellium a huge amount of granular control at the online portal and provided detailed information on the number of users on the access points. The software also allowed Intellium to update the hardware and software, remove users, restrict the amount of data, and restrict users based on time or day. "We are a one-stop shop for NorthWest. They wanted a solution and provider they could trust and rely on, so they could focus on giving their shoppers the very best experience possible," said Mr Taylor.

The Results

When the centre opened to great fanfare in October 2015, customers were treated to free, unlimited Wi-Fi on a robust, seamless, and reliable connection. With very low support overheads and no outages, Linh Luong is proud of the outcome. One of the most valuable benefits, however, has been the smart data analytics provided by the effective integration between Aerohive's solution and Euclids' software. The software picks up the unique identifier on a smartphone, scrambles it for privacy, and delivers general but valuable data, such as the length of time that shoppers spend in the mall. "Through data analytics, we were able to capture data on how shoppers spend their time and where they visit. We've learnt from the reports that 52% of our shoppers are visiting us for the first time, which reveals we still have room for marketing growth. That's been a really helpful piece of information for us," said Ms Luong. "The network has been working really well for us. Having effortless access to Wi-Fi is a positive experience for customers, and that's our point of difference. The other shopping centres in our catchment area cannot provide the same quality of experience. They see it more as a revenue generator, whereas we see it as a value-added service for our customers—it's quite a different approach," added Ms Luong. The retail data insights offered by Aerohive's advanced network solutions reflect the extra value provided by today's digital technologies. Retailers are now able to deliver higher quality services to their customers, meeting the expectations of the 'always-connected' consumer, while at the same time gaining a competitive edge through deeper data analytics. It's one of the reasons that, for Intellium, wireless networking is now their fastest growing product suite.

> "We were looking to provide point of differentiation by deploying state of the art technology to deliver unrivalled facilities to retailers and an enhanced shopping experience for customers in store. Not only did we find that the technology we deployed previously lacked the key functionality needed, it was not user-friendly or intuitive. Most importantly, we are in a very competitive business. To stay ahead of the game, we need to gain greater information about how our customers are browsing and searching for products and services within our shopping centre,"
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> — Linh Luong
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