CASE STUDY

THE ARUBA MOBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVES AND PERSONALIZES THE GUEST EXPERIENCE

Emirates Palace
Abu Dhabi أبوظبي

Emirates Palace is a testament to the warmth and generosity of Arabian hospitality. It combines exquisite Arabian themed architecture and design with world class facilities and the most advanced technologies to give its guests a truly unforgettable world-class experience.

In keeping with its commitment to excellence, the hotel continuously analyses and assesses the needs and preferences of its valued customers. Of these, the growing demand for high-speed wireless Internet connectivity has been a significant market trend.

While Emirates Palace was quick to cater to this requirement, its legacy Wi-Fi used was not centralized and therefore required manual configuration of over 1,000 access points (APs) around the property. This was a daunting challenge that was exacerbated when the multitude of high-profile conferences and events were held at the iconic venue.

With 600-700 guests utilizing the network in an average day and peak usage rising to anywhere between 1,200 and 1,400 daily users, the strain on the network began to cause noticeable performance issues.

REQUIREMENTS

- Centralize the administration of the wireless network and eliminate manual configuration of individual access points.
- Overhaul the wired and wireless infrastructure to upgrade from 54 Mbps capacity to gigabit Wi-Fi speed.
- Enable advanced security features and customized network configurations based on the requirements of individual meetings and events.
- Build a platform for innovation to support ambitious future plans such as IPTV, online gaming, music streaming and smart device control of room facilities.

SOLUTION

- Centralized Aruba 7000 Mobility Controller
- 1000+ Aruba AP-225 wireless access points
- ArubaOS™ operating system
- Aruba AirWave™ network management

BENEFITS

- Centralized configuration and management of all access points from a single intuitive GUI.
- 1.3 Gbps Wi-Fi across the entire property, including the 1.3 km private beach.
- Trouble-free integration with the newly deployed wired infrastructure.
- Vastly improved security and the ability to customize the network according to the needs of guests and business customers.

As guests increasingly utilized bandwidth-hungry video and multimedia-rich applications, both the speed and security of the network were brought into question. Furthermore, the IT team at Emirates Palace observed that 100-150 users were connecting with gigabit Wi-Fi-enabled 802.11ac devices.

The need for an overhaul of the network was apparent and Emirates Palace, guided by local Aruba Networks partner MDS UAE, made a decision to simultaneously upgrade its wired and wireless infrastructure.

“We were determined to get our network up to the extremely high standards that is the hallmark of the hotel,” said Mehmet Akdeniz, director of IT and AV at Emirates Palace.

"Any upgrade to the network however requires on-the-fly changes to the implementation process so as not to cause any inconvenience to the guests," he said. "This can be challenging and time consuming so we decided on a solution that would meet our requirements for the next 4-5 years."

This forward thinking approach led Mr. Akdeniz and his IT team to consider an enterprise-grade 802.11ac wireless LAN, a decision that would make Emirates Palace the first hotel in the Middle East to deploy this cutting-edge Wi-Fi standard.

A STANDOUT SOLUTION

Mr. Akdeniz and his team evaluated solutions from Aruba Networks, along with two other market leading vendors. Aruba stood out as the only vendor offering 802.11ac technology. With a rising number of guests already utilizing devices that supported this standard, this would prove to be a distinct advantage to the hotel.

An Aruba 7000 Mobility Controller and over 1,000 Aruba AP-225 APs were rolled out across the sprawling property. MDS UAE also deployed the AirWave network management for visibility into the Wi-Fi network, enabling IT to proactively plan for capacity, optimize client performance and troubleshoot application issues.

Seamless integration with the wired network and minimal configuration led to trouble-free installation. Emirates Palace also availed of a one week training program offered by Aruba.

"Aruba helped our network engineers not only learn about their solution but also gave them a detailed understanding of the broader market technologies," said Mr. Akdeniz. "We are now able to fully utilize the Aruba solution to simplify the management of what used to be complex tasks."

"Having a competent Aruba platinum partner carry out the implementation was a huge benefit to us," he added. "Even industry leading technology is only as good as its implementation and MDS UAE ensured that the entire network was configured for optimal performance."

A MOBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FUTURE INNOVATION

While the most noticeable advantage of the new network was a monumental increase in capacity from 54 Mbps to 1.3 Gbps, the centrally-managed Wi-Fi infrastructure was one of the most appealing features for IT.

The Aruba 7000 Mobility Controller eliminates the need to manually configure individual APs and automates software updates for all APs. And with features like whitelist coordination, valid AP lists, control plane security certificates, and wireless intrusion protection, Emirates Palace has now achieved the highest level of security.

Through the Mobility Controller's intuitive graphical interface, IT can make rapid changes to network and security settings. This critical feature has enabled Emirates Palace to meet the specific needs of high-profile meetings and conferences.

"We no longer waste precious manpower tending to labour intensive processes," Mr. Akdeniz noted. "Everything is easily managed from one location and our new-found visibility into every element of the network has enabled proactive troubleshooting and reduced our reaction time."

"Complaints about poor network performance have virtually disappeared and our business customers are often amazed to find how quickly we can accommodate their connectivity requirements," he added.

Mr. Akdeniz believes that the Aruba mobility solution will act as a platform for further innovation. While the current Wi-Fi network supports Internet access, point-of-sale and digital signage, Emirates Palace is now considering the deployment of a wider range of guest services in the future.

In fact, plans are under way to offer IPTV, online gaming, Internet music streaming and smart-device control of in-room electronics. These services will rely heavily on the availability of bandwidth capacity and prioritization of specific traffic flows, which Aruba will easily handle for the foreseeable future.

"In the hospitality industry, it's not just about providing Wi-Fi," said Mr. Akdeniz. "It's about providing Wi-Fi that's trusted and reliable, which allows venues to create a high-quality mobility experience that guests will appreciate."

"The Aruba mobility infrastructure lets us improve and personalize the guest experience in ways that nobody has ever considered," he said. "This is the kind of service excellence that the Emirates Palace is synonymous with and we credit Aruba as an enabler of our success."

ABOUT ARUBA NETWORKS

Aruba Networks (NASDAQ:ARUN) is a leading provider of next-generation network access solutions for the mobile enterprise. Its Mobile Virtual Enterprise (MOVE) architecture unifies wired and wireless network infrastructures into one seamless access solution, enabling entities of all sizes to securely address the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) phenomenon, dramatically improving productivity and lowering capital and operational costs.

OVERVIEW

Located in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, Emirates Palace is an iconic hotel that combines traditional Arabian theme and hospitality at its finest. A venue that regularly hosts royalty, heads of state, celebrities and VIPs from across the globe, the hotel boasts 394 meticulously designed rooms and suites, 40 meeting rooms, a 1,200 seat Auditorium, a spa and fitness club, tennis courts, 1.3 km of private beach, and a state of the art marina capable of accommodating up to 167 yachts.

Based in Sunnyvale, California, Aruba has operations throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific regions.

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aruba NETWORKS

1344 CROSSMAN AVE | SUNNYVALE, CA 94089
1.866.55.ARUBA | T: 1.408.227.4500 | FAX: 1.408.227.4550 | INFO@ARUBANETWORKS.COM

www.arubanetworks.com