

GRISTEDES

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Seeking to streamline operations, Gristedes, a leading Manhattan-based grocer, replaced expensive network appliances and costly wide-area-network (WAN) links with Remote Access Points (RAPs) from Aruba Networks. Gristedes found that the RAPs were easier to deploy, faster and less expensive than any other available alternative.

Aruba AP-105 access points (APs) at each store let the retailer run everything from digital signage to inventory control over its in-store wireless LAN (WLAN), while ensuring communication compliance based on Payment Card Industry (PCI) standards for business transactions.

The innovative grocer also uses Dolphin® 9900 wireless mobile computers from ArubaEdge partner Honeywell Scanning & Mobility – powered by Honeywell’s remote management software from SOTI – to handle inventory management over Aruba Wi-Fi infrastructure.

Gristedes has been feeding New Yorkers for over 100 years. Its stores offer fresh meats, produce, dairy products, baked goods, frozen foods, gourmet foods and nonfood items. In addition to providing great products, Gristedes is intently focused on optimizing its customers’ shopping experiences.

Gristedes’ customers have come to expect not only the best products at the greatest value in town, but also an excellent in-store experience rooted in a high level of personal engagement.

The company depends on its in-store wireless networks to deliver that experience, for instance through electronic signage. With grocers’ margins typically running from 2-3 percent, the wireless network also plays a central role in efficiently managing inventory.

“We have about 70 Honeywell Dolphin 9900 wireless mobile computers that we use for inventory management,” said Shawn Winters, IT infrastructure manager for Gristedes. “The central configuration enabled by Aruba means we set up every store with RAPs in bridge mode, so if we lose connectivity for any reason the scanners and the local Wi-Fi network stay up. We manage the Honeywell Dolphins with the SOTI MobiControl solution, which Honeywell recommended for mobile device management, and it works flawlessly.”

In addition to the Aruba AP-105 APs, Gristedes operates 15 stores equipped with Aruba RAP-5s that provide wired Layer 3 access. The RAP-5s create a VPN tunnel back to the Gristedes data center, and cellular modems connected to the RAPs via a USB port provide 3G failover in the event of WAN link outage.

The backup capability is crucial to operations because, as Winters notes, “wired Internet connection service in Manhattan is awful.”

In any given week at Gristedes, at least one site goes down due to cable cuts or other circuit interruptions. The chain’s wired service provider, a global telco, takes anywhere from a few hours to a few days to troubleshoot and repair problem circuits.

The RAP-5 cellular backup feature automatically takes over during wired circuit outages to keep point-of-sale and other vital retail systems online. Winters notes that because the 3G service is almost as fast as a T1 line, the cellular backup delivers virtually full functionality when the wired network is down.

“We recently had a store in which the circuit went down on Friday night,” said Winters. “The store ran all weekend over the RAP-5, until the telco could restore the T1 on Monday. We put through 1.5 gigabits of data over that period. Without the RAP-5 there would have been no data – no credit cards, nothing. It has saved us time after time.”

Wireless digital signage was also a key driver for the wireless deployment. Manufacturers and distributors of the products sold by Gristedes pay the Manhattan grocer to advertise on its in-store digital signage system.



"We do very well with our wireless digital signage and paid advertising," said Winters. "We've rolled it out to all the stores and it's really paying off. Only halfway through the year and we're sold out through the end of December. We're in the process of doubling the signage – the system paid for itself in the first month and it's a no-brainer to expand it."

Gristedes is extremely satisfied with the wireless data capture solution it built on the Aruba, Honeywell, and SOTI platforms. Prior to standardizing on this solution, the stores had a wide assortment of equipment and no minimum performance standards.

With the new, integrated solution, quality-of-service (QoS) and network security policies are uniformly enforced, and management is centralized. If an issue arises, Winters and his team can use Aruba's AirWave suite to immediately track it down to the individual mobile computer and associated AP.

Winters said that the Aruba wireless access network delivers 100 percent coverage. Every component of the network can be managed through the AirWave control and SOTI server, and bar code reading problems are a thing of the past due to the high performance of the Honeywell Dolphin mobile computers.

"The combination of Aruba, Honeywell, and SOTI is really the triple crown," said Winters.

The centralized management brings another benefit – fewer truck rolls. Problems can be diagnosed, and in many cases corrected remotely, from the data center.

"Moving overland between stores in Manhattan can make a 'New York minute' seem like a pretty long day," said Winters. "The travel time we save with centralized management is significant, and allows the IT team to focus on business-enhancing projects instead of movement between locations."



SOLUTION

- Aruba AP-105 access points in all stores.
- Aruba RAP-5 Remote Access Points in 15 stores.
- Redundant Aruba 6000 Mobility Controller with an M3 controller module at headquarters and a backup 3600 Mobility Controller offsite. The pair ensures that if one fails, traffic is routed from the backup to the other via MPLS.
- Aruba Policy Enforcement Firewall™ (PEF™) software.
- AirWave™ for network management, rogue detection, troubleshooting, and device management.
- Honeywell Dolphin 9900 wireless mobile computers with remote device management software powered by SOTI.

BENEFITS

- Increased reliability by replacing wired LAN connections with Aruba RAPs to provide 3G backup in the event of WAN failure.
- Increased productivity due to enhanced mobility, remote diagnostics and reduced downtime.
- High-profit advertising applications that run over the commonly shared wireless access network.

SUMMARY

Efficiency and reliability are central to profitability in the grocery industry. Gristedes of Manhattan, a progressive grocer with over 30 locations in New York, leverages Aruba WLANs, Honeywell Dolphin mobile computers and SOTI MobiControl mobile device management to maximize efficiency and uptime.

Aruba's remote management capabilities save Gristedes time and money by reducing truck rolls, while the grocer's advanced inventory control system works in conjunction with Honeywell Dolphin mobile computers and SOTI MobiControl to keep down costs.

Additionally, automatic 3G failover enabled by Aruba RAPs keeps information flowing in the event of a T1 outage, while wireless digital signage connected to the Aruba WLAN drives shopper awareness and generates significant revenues.

Honeywell

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