



CASE STUDY Healthcare

Aruba delivers quality WLAN services to doctors, staff and patients at ZNA (Ziekenhuis Netwerk Antwerpen)

“Our wireless LAN provides both convenience and mission-critical service to our users,” said Guy Meyers, network manager at ZNA. “It brings critical patient records and some diagnostic information, such as ECGs, to the bed of the patient.”

“It also provides our staff with access to corporate applications such as email and the enterprise portal from anywhere,” he continued. “Finally, the guest network access that we provide has proven to be very popular with our patients and the external cooperatives that work at our facilities.”

Standardizing on the Aruba WLAN infrastructure

ZNA first implemented wireless LAN (WLAN) technology in 2005.

“Our network must operate the same across all of our sites,” Meyers said. “Doctors and other staff expect to be able to move from one part of a hospital to another without losing connectivity. The network must also secure sensitive patient information while providing quality of service to all of our users. Aruba met all of our requirements very effectively.”

Meyers cited Aruba’s centralized management, rogue detection capabilities, and conformance to IEEE standards as important advantages. In addition, Aruba’s Policy Enforcement Firewall (PEF) proved to be very useful in managing access to ZNA’s diverse user populations.

“We are very pleased with the centralized management capabilities, security, redundancy and stability of the platform,” said Meyers.

The need for user-centric troubleshooting

While Aruba’s centralized Mobility Controllers made configuration and other management tasks much simpler,

Meyers wanted a better way to monitor the network and diagnose user problems.

“An element management system does not provide a completely centralized view,” he explained. “We might have to look in several places to identify potential causes of a problem. And, user problems can be difficult to troubleshoot.”

“If a user tells me that he lost connectivity at a specific time, it takes a lot of effort to determine when and where he had connected, what he was doing, and what may have happened since he connected,” noted Meyers. “An element management system only tells you whether or not he is connected now.”

Driving operational efficiency with AirWave

Fortunately, Aruba had a solution for ZNA’s problem: AirWave™. The organization started using the AirWave Management Platform™ (AMP) in late 2009 and began to see immediate value. Meyers and his staff of three were able to start using the solution with no special training.

Visibility saves time and money

The most important benefits that AirWave brings to ZNA are in troubleshooting. Although network usage has grown



Location

Antwerp, Belgium

Network Size

- 275 access points (APs) in facilities across Antwerp Province
- 120 switches

Infrastructure Mixture

- Three Aruba 6000 Mobility Controllers
- AP-61 and AP-105 access points

AirWave Products

- AirWave Management Platform™
- AirWave VisualRF™

significantly, Meyers' team is closing trouble tickets up a lot faster with the same staffing levels.

"AirWave has saved us money by showing us where problems don't exist," Meyers said. "Before AirWave, when someone had a connectivity problem, we didn't have an easy way to prove that the issue was not with the Aruba AP. We would have to invest a lot of time and effort looking for a problem that wasn't there. Now, we can pinpoint client problems immediately."

With a mobile workforce, AirWave's tracking capabilities are also critical for effective troubleshooting.

"When a problem occurs, you need to look not just at the event but back into the past — at where the user has been and to which APs he has connected," Meyers noted. "It's a big advantage to have all of that information available on demand, in one place."

Furthermore, AirWave's monitoring and alerting have enabled Meyers and his team to react quickly to problems and to repair them before they affect users.

"Now, the way that we hear about a Aruba problem is from AirWave, not from our users," he added.

Improved management communications and capacity planning

The ZNA network staff finds AirWave 7 reports to be very useful for communicating the state of the network. Every week, the network staff emails a set of reports to its management team showing usage patterns, bandwidth consumption and more. The information helps to build confidence in the quality of service (QoS) and provides interesting insights into patient needs.

"We have all been surprised by just how much the patients are using the WLAN," Meyers commented.

Meyers and his team use many of the same reports — and the details within them — to make better planning decisions.

"We know which APs are not heavily used, and why," he said. "We also know which ones are consistently overloaded."

ZNA is beginning to upgrade its WLAN to Aruba's high-performance 802.11n access points (APs). Using data from AirWave, our network team is focusing first on areas where they know that their investments will drive the biggest service improvements. Historical data has been particularly useful since usage patterns can change from week to week.

According to Meyers, "With AirWave, we are armed with the information we need to take appropriate actions, and that translates into better network performance and reliability."

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Organization Overview

ZNA (Antwerp Hospital Network) is Belgium's leading healthcare provider offering affordable and high quality healthcare in the Antwerp metropolitan area and beyond, and one of Europe's top ten hospitals. ZNA consists of three general hospitals and six specialized care centres totalling some 2,500 beds. It serves over 1 million inhabitants in the Antwerp region and employs 7,000 people, 600 of which are medical doctors in all caring for 7,000 patients every day.

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