BURJ AL ARAB UPGRADES COMPLIMENTARY PREMIUM WI-FI AND NEW WIRELESS-BASED SERVICES FOR GUESTS WITH ARUBA TECHNOLOGY

The Burj Al Arab Jumeirah is a truly iconic hotel with many technological firsts to its name including being the first hotel to have Wi-Fi and computers and plasma TVs in every suite. For Mr. Menezes, maintaining this competitive edge meant ensuring the Hotel's Wi-Fi services too offered superior performance, coverage and overall quality of service.

"Wi-Fi is today a basic expectation of hotel guests, but we wanted to go over and above and deliver a memorable premium experience even as the number of devices connecting to Wi-Fi has more than doubled in recent years," Mr. Menezes explained.

A PENCHANT FOR PREMIUM SERVICE

To achieve this goal, Mr. Menezes and his team decided to use the latest 802.11ac Gigabit Wi-Fi standard. "We knew this would enable us to support a range of new services in the future to further enhance our guests' stay," he said.

Mr. Menezes wanted to ensure that the investment could also be used for back-end services that would improve the Hotel's efficiency.

At the time, the Burj Al Arab's existing Wi-Fi solution was based on Aruba technology and this simplified the selection criteria. "Apart from the need to keep up with the advancement of technology, we had no complaints with our original deployment. Aruba always had a very solid Wi-Fi offering," said Mr. Menezes.

SELECTING THE VERY LATEST SOLUTIONS

Aruba's ultra-fast 220-series 802.11ac Access Points (APs) were selected to offer the highest performance in high-density environments. "With no restrictions on bandwidth and an average of 10 devices connecting per suite, these were both important criteria," said Mr. Menezes.

In all, over 900 APs were deployed across the hotel, making centralized AP management another key requirement. To address

REQUIREMENTS
- High-performance, high-density, and secure Wi-Fi
- 100% coverage with seamless roaming
- Future-proof solution that enables introduction of innovative services for guests and staff

SOLUTION
- 802.11ac Indoor & Outdoor APs
- 7200 Series Mobility Controllers
- Aruba AirWave for network management
- Aruba ClientMatch for seamless roaming

BENEFITS
- Hotel-wide Gigabit speed Wi-Fi for guests with seamless roaming.
- Centralized administration of extensive wireless network.
- Robust security with Wi-Fi system's inbuilt advanced security features.
- Platform supports innovative new wireless-based services for guests and hotel staff.

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> **NEIL MENEZES**
> VP – IT OPERATIONS AT JUMEIRAH GROUP

this, dual Aruba 7200-series Mobility Controllers were used. "This gave our IT team the ability to configure, update and manage all APs from a single intuitive pane of glass," he said.

AIRWAVE AND ARUBA'S EXPERTISE

To offer a truly premium quality of service, the Burj Al Arab required 100% coverage across its entire premises. However, the Hotel's iconic atrium, with its open layout and steel framework, threw up challenges.

"RF signaling in this area was extremely complicated as it was impacted by a number of design and material factors," explained Mr. Menezes. Here, the expertise of Aruba's team and capabilities of the AirWave Network Management helped resolve all issues.

"Aruba's experts became deeply involved in the deployment and tackled these challenges in a systematic and professional manner," said Mr. Menezes.

DESIGNING IN THE DARK

Another area where the expertise of Aruba's team shone through was with the design and deployment of Wi-Fi coverage for the new Burj Al Arab Terrace. At the time, the Hotel could share few details of this highly anticipated expansion but required rapid Wi-Fi installation once it was installed.

"Aruba's team expertly designed the layout and accounted for everything from coverage quality to cabling layout and aesthetics," said Mr. Menezes. "This was remarkable given how little information we could share with them at the time."

AN EYE FOR AESTHETICS

Attention to detail and breathtaking designs have always been a distinguishing aspect of the Hotel. It was essential therefore for the APs to be seamlessly blended into the design.

"We are a demanding customer with very stringent requirements. Aruba rose to the challenge and extensively customized its APs and positioned them so as to be nearly invisible to guests," said Mr. Menezes.

An example of such customization was at the Burj Al Arab's opulent 'Gold on 27' bar that called for the APs to be painted in a specific shade of gold to match the exquisite ambience.

GUEST SATISFACTION IMMEDIATELY IMPROVES

The immediate benefit of the new deployment was the improvement in Wi-Fi services for guests. "Our guest satisfaction surveys showed that they were very happy with the speed, availability and quality of service. We also saw improvement in our ratings and feedback," said Mr. Menezes.

With Aruba's unique ClientMatch solution, guests' devices seamlessly transition between APs as they roam the Hotel's premises, resulting in a consistently high quality of service with no drop in performance or connectivity.

ROBUST SECURITY IS A KEY BENEFIT

As with every IT project undertaken by the Jumeirah Group, security was no small consideration in the deployment.

"Aruba's solution has impressive inbuilt security. Robust authentication and other features ensure that our guests are fully secured and protected while still enjoying high performance Wi-Fi," Mr. Menezes said. The Hotel has also activated Aruba's Wireless Intrusion Protection (WIP) feature to detect and mitigate the threat of rogue APs.

These security features further ensure that the Hotel's many Point of Sale (POS) systems, which are all Wi-Fi connected, can execute their transactions safely.

WI-FI INFRASTRUCTURE IS A PLATFORM FOR INNOVATION

Aruba's Wi-Fi has enabled the Jumeirah Group to be able to introduce a plethora of new guest services. "We now have tablet based premium check-in, mobile check-in and check-out, iPad menus in restaurants and new apps for an unmatched guest experience," explained Mr. Menezes.

An example of such an app is 'Gold on 27', which enables guests to make reservations for the bar via their smart devices. Aruba APs deployed at the main gate entrance to the hotel play a role in enabling the identification of guests who have booked through the app, pass this information on to the security and greeting teams and thus facilitate a very warm and personalized welcome.

NEW SERVICES IMPROVE STAFF EFFICIENCY

This ability to innovate is not only restricted to guest services. "We have introduced new smart device based services for our housekeeping staff," said Mr. Menezes.

Here too, Aruba's solutions enhance security by allowing the segmentation of staff and guest

networks. "For our employees, we have two-factor authentication in the form of certificate based authentication with Active Directory integration," he said.

"Wi-Fi connected devices give our colleagues up-to-the-minute data on room occupancy, guest requests and other vital information. This makes it possible for them to better co-ordinate their efforts and execute their functions more efficiently," Mr. Menezes explained.

ARUBA SUPPORT GOES THE EXTRA MILE

Mr. Menezes maintains that equally important to the impressive technological features is the support of Aruba's team. "Aruba's technology and the commitment of their local team made deploying and managing the Wi-Fi infrastructure as smooth as running a hot knife through butter," he said.

"We are a 24×7 operation and any downtime has an immediate impact on our ability to serve our guests. Issues need to be monitored and managed proactively and need to be fixed on the fly and Aruba's team, together with our highly-dedicated IT Team, has demonstrated that they are extremely committed to making this possible, day and night," he added.

Commitment to Future Collaboration and Innovation

Looking to the future, Mr. Menezes is confident that together with Aruba, he and his team will continue to explore the complete potential of the Wi-Fi infrastructure and Aruba's Mobile First solution portfolio. "We will soon roll out location based guest services, powered by Aruba Beacons at Madinat Jumeirah. Once this has been successfully launched, we will expand mobile-based services at other hotels within the Group, including the Burj Al Arab," he said.

"Over the course of our 8-year relationship, we have come to see Aruba's team as an extension of our own. Relationships are a big priority for us and we look forward to their ongoing support as we continue to leverage technology to create exhilarating experiences for our guests," Mr. Menezes concluded.