

CASE STUDY

UNIFIED NETWORK CREATES PLATFORM FOR INCREASED AUTOMATION AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AT CASA



Casa is a leading European homewares retailer with more than 500 stores in 11 countries which, even as many bricks-and-mortar retailers struggle, continues to expand.

“We opened 35 new stores in the Netherlands in 2018. Sometimes four in one week,” says Benny De Ryck, network & systems administrator, Casa. “That places quite a strain on the team, but we’re confident in our store expansion.”

Casa is executing on a comprehensive omni-channel strategy as part of a digital transformation vision. It launched a click-and-collect service in 2017 and has an online and mobile presence. However, homeware customers continue to prefer the physical environment, particularly for high-ticket goods.

AUTOMATION TO DRIVE RETAIL EFFICIENCY

The focus for Casa is continued efficiency. It wants to optimise its supply chain, manage costs and ensure customers see the best selection of goods instore. It then wants to fulfil orders quickly.

The business moved to a new, purpose-built headquarters and centralised logistics centre in 2018. The facility is in Olen, Belgium, not 10km from the previous headquarters. At 50,000sqm, it is considerably larger. The Olen site has 62 docking bays, and storage capacity for more than 50,000 pallets. At busy times of the year it will run 24/7.



“We saw an opportunity to rethink our network across the entire operation, from stores to warehouse. We wanted to create more automated workflows at the new facility,” says De Ryck. “We’re looking at doubling capacity without increasing headcount. That requires our operations to be smarter.”

For this to work Casa needed a comprehensive mobile-first network on which to run a range of functionalities. From day one it wanted staff to be able to access authorised handheld

REQUIREMENTS

- Accelerate the deployment of new headquarters and warehouse
- Drive seamless communication and collaboration across retail, warehouse and HQ
- Support innovation around automation and IoT to drive operational efficiencies
- Simplify processes, manage costs, drive great customer experiences
- Ensure network security and support GDPR compliance

SOLUTIONS

- Aruba Instant wireless APs [shops]
- Aruba controller-based wireless APs [HQ & warehouse]
- Aruba Mobility Controllers
- HPE FlexFabric 5900 Data Centre switches
- HPE FlexFabric 5130 Data Centre switches
- Aruba 2930 Campus access switches
- AirWave Network Management
- ClearPass Secure Network Access
- BYOD and Guest Access
- Connected warehouse: robots, building management, security

OUTCOMES

- Transitioned to new network, and new HQ, with no operational downtime
- Enabled the business to extend automation: more than 30% of new distribution centre is now fully automated, enabling 24/7 operations
- Increasingly achieving paperless processes
- Establish high-performance wireless coverage throughout new 85,000sqm distribution centre
- Secure, role-based access and consistent experience for staff, management and guests alike
- Standardised network across 200+ retail stores, with plans to roll-out to 500 by 2019

“ It doesn’t matter where you are, or what device you’re working off, you just plug in and the system is going to see who you are and determine your access by a set of rules. Aruba ClearPass means we’re more secure, and better managed. ”

BENNY DE RYCK
NETWORK & SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR, CASA
INTERNATIONAL

devices from anywhere in the building, and for driverless vehicles to navigate the site. In the future, says De Ryck, Casa understood there would be opportunities for new wireless or IoT features:

“We also needed a network solution that would be reliable – these systems are mission-critical and must be simple to get up and running.”



Simplified network security management through ClearPass

The Aruba solution stems from a long-term engagement between Casa and AXI, an Aruba partner. Casa has relied on HPE servers, storage and backup for a number of years; De Ryck says it was natural to discuss the new network requirements with AXI.

The architecture consists of Aruba Instant access points in 200+ stores, and two mobility controllers managing 130 access points in the warehouse and HQ. In the two Casa data centres, there are HPE FlexFabric 5900 switches in the core, and server access is provided via FlexFabric 5130 switches. In the Campus and Branch Edge layers, meaning the warehouse and remote offices, there is a mix of FlexFabric 5130 and Aruba 2930 switches. The network is then managed by HPE Intelligent Management Centre [IMC] for the LAN, and Aruba Airwave Network Management for the WLAN.

The crucial part of the solution, says De Ryck, is ClearPass: “ClearPass was key. Once configured, it allowed us to move faster. That meant we were able to have the new facility operational quicker, but also gave us confidence that future changes would be simple. ClearPass gave us everything we needed around automation and security.”

A SINGULAR NETWORK ARCHITECTURE ACROSS THE ENTIRE OPERATION

The result is a high-performance network that future-proofs the business for the next five years. It delivers a unified network, with central management across 200+ stores, head office and distribution centres. De Ryck says the plan is for all 500

Casa stores, possibly with the exception of franchise stores in France, to be on the Aruba network by the end of 2019:

“Of the 200 stores we’ve upgraded, each has three or four Aruba Instant access points, and the roll-out has gone smoothly. It gives us – users, management, and the IT team, a consistent experience.”

ClearPass allows De Ryck to manage secure access for a range of users: there is BYOD for senior management, guest users (including contractors, visiting the head office or stores) and regular staff, and secure corporate access on company-authenticated devices. Robots, automated autonomous vehicles and all other IoT devices are also authenticated and connected to the network via specific policies.

“It doesn’t matter where you are, or what device you’re working off, you just plug in and the system is going to see who you are and determine your access by a set of rules,” says De Ryck. “It makes us more secure and better managed.”

Creating a digital workflow

Crucially, the new Olen distribution centre is more efficient and more automated (the old warehouse has remained open as the business continues to grow). Approximately one-third of the work is now fully automated, says De Ryck, with voice-picking orders and driverless forklift vehicles moving across the site. Staff can check order updates on handheld devices, all connected to the network, or instruct robots with voice commands through mobile headsets. Much of Casa’s processes are now paperless.

As a by-product, the new logistics centre is cleaner, calmer and less cluttered. “It’s a much more pleasant place to work,” says De Ryck.

Ease of management and scalability will allow Casa to add new smart functionality as required. The pace of change, and the digitisation of workflows, is only going to accelerate.

“We need things to work first-time, every time,” De Ryck says. “The reliability of the Aruba Mobile First Architecture means we can start these projects with confidence.”

