

CASE STUDY

ARUBA MOBILE FIRST PLATFORM DELIVERS SECURE, HIGH-PERFORMANCE NETWORK FOR FRANCE'S LEADING RUGBY CLUB.



Stade Toulousain is France's most famous rugby team, and one of the country's most recognisable sports brands. Its Ernest-Wallon Stadium holds approximately 20,000 fans for each home game; the club dominates the sporting affections of the city of Toulouse.

"It's important we provide an 'experience' for fans," says Vincent Bonnet, Marketing Director, Stade Toulousain. "Not just when fans watch the game, but when they visit the stadium. More than that, the experience should extend beyond match days, and it should extend internationally.

"When people ask, who is the number one club in football, they answer 'Liverpool' or 'Barcelona'. When they talk about rugby, we want them to say 'Stade Toulousain'."

PERSONALISING THE FAN EXPERIENCE

Digital offers a huge opportunity for Stade Toulousain. The club already has one million fans across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and Bonnet hopes to double that figure within five years. "We'd like to create experiences to engage fans in Paris, Tokyo or L.A.," he says. "This is a brand and revenue opportunity for us."

Stade Toulousain strives to be the first rugby club in France to have Wi-Fi coverage across the entire site. It wants high-quality, free Wi-Fi available to fans, coaches, players, media, commercial partners and the club's management.

"Digital provides the opportunity to personalise the experience for different users," says Bonnet. "It should also generate a huge amount of valuable user data."



From zero to 20,000

The Stade Toulousain site offers a number of challenges. Besides the 20,000-seat stadium, there is a training centre, two training pitches, restaurant, and hospitality marquees. The stadium itself includes 33 corporate boxes as well as management offices. The

REQUIREMENTS

- Create dynamic and engaging environment for fans and visitors
- Establish an innovative & modern Connected Stadium
- Deliver increased value and content during games
- Drive increased usage of the stadium App
- Offer personalised services to fans and visitors

SOLUTION

- 802.11ac Indoor & Outdoor Aruba APs
- Aruba 5400 series campus core switches
- Aruba 2920 & 2530 campus edge switches
- AirWave Network Management
- ClearPass Policy Manager

BENEFITS

- Increased fan loyalty and experience
- Increased incremental retail revenues via the Mobile App
- Seamless Wi-Fi connectivity across club facilities
- Site-wide, high-density Wi-Fi
- Scale to accommodate ~20,000 fans onsite
- Singular view of entire network for simplifying management
- Robust platform on which to develop mobile and IoT initiatives

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JULIEN BARÈS

CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, STADE TOULOUSAIN

site can go from near empty to 20,000+ people within the space of an hour.

"Firstly, we needed a solution that would be secure – we have thousands of people logging on and they need to know their privacy is protected," says Julien Barès, Chief Information Officer, Stade Toulousain. "And the performance needs to be perfect. For instance, if fans are uploading a picture to social media, they don't want the connection to drop out."

Also, the solution would need to be created on a platform on which the club could build new services. The first of which, a new Stade Toulousain App, allows fans to order drinks, buy club merchandise and watch live coverage of the game. Live streaming is not allowed on the public airways, so the App and the stadium network is a great way of offering this value to the fans.

“Wi-Fi alone is not enough,” says Barès. “People expect Wi-Fi. We want to be seen as an innovator.”

Security and ease of use

The fully-networked Ernest-Wallon Stadium is underpinned by Aruba technology. The solution includes two Aruba 5400 series switches in the core, over 30 Aruba 2920 and 2530 access switches, and more than 120 indoor and outdoor 220 and 270 series access points. Coverage spans the entire site, including the training facilities, corporate boxes and the fan areas immediately surrounding the stadium.

Guest access is managed by Aruba ClearPass Policy Manager offering a secure guest sign-on portal. The network is overseen by Aruba AirWave Network Management.

“The Aruba solution offers us security, ease of use and most importantly,” says Barès, “the ability to get the most information out of how the network is being used.”

The first connected stadium in French rugby

The solution has been in place since the start of the 2016-17 season. As hoped, it has created the first ‘smart stadium’ in French rugby.

The impact is felt across the club. For fans, solid Wi-Fi means they can access social media. For players and coaches, on-field training is supported by video analysis of rival players, on tablet devices. For club management, documents can be shared and accessed across the site. Everyone who needs Wi-Fi, has Wi-Fi.

“We’re the first rugby club to create a Connected Stadium,” says Bonnet. “The Aruba solution has allowed us to build the Stade Toulousain App, the first of many, we hope. Aruba is at the heart of the club’s digital programme.”

LOCATION BASED APP CONTENT

For the 2016-17 season fans have been able to download, register and use the App for every home game. Fans can use the App to order food and drinks (beating the regular queues) and watch live coverage of the game (from a choice of three camera angles) when they’re away from their seat.

“The game coverage is only available via Wi-Fi, in the stadium. Even if you’re registered you can’t access it via 4G,” says Barès. “We want fans to have that experience at the matches. If you want the full experience, come to the game.”

The App is available for free and initial figures suggest food, beverage and merchandise sales have increased. Barès says it is typical for 1,000 fans to be logged on during a game, a figure he expects to rise as awareness increases and the App becomes established. “We plan for 30% simultaneous connectivity on our Wi-Fi. This means nearly 6,000 connections at any one time.”

People can order food and drinks from any place in the stadium and select which outlet or meeting point they wish to collect them from. The most available outlets will be prioritised to ensure the shortest queues. What’s more, App users enjoy the benefit of the priority App queues. Once at the outlet, mobile PoS units are used to quickly scan their App screen and a QR-code confirms their ID and order.



Data to create new services

The Aruba solution allows Stade Toulousain to see who is on the network, how often they’re using the App and for what purpose.

For Bonnet, this is a key appeal: mining the data for user insight creates the opportunity to create new engagements with different users: “For instance, we may create unique services for corporate sponsors – personalised greetings from the players, pre-match drinks based on previous orders. We’re looking at areas to host younger fans, maybe with different music and drinks, to get them to the stadium earlier and keep them here longer after the game.”

For Barès, the data shows high-traffic areas and blackspots. He can use heat maps to see when the network is being used, and when it isn’t. “A typical game might see 30Gb of data transferred,” he says. “With Airwave Network Management, we have the means to monitor these changes.”

A platform on which to strengthen engagement

As with any great sporting club, performance is judged by what takes place today – and what is being built for the future. Barès says he is excited about the possibilities of growing with Aruba. He expects to add Bluetooth Beacons to enable wayfinding and location-based services, and the App will add more functionality.

“I can see us using location services to help fans meet up with friends, or have drinks delivered to a certain seat. It’s important Stade Toulousain stays ahead of other clubs in terms of off-field innovation.”

Bonnet, enthusiastic for more insight, says the future may involve more data points. “For instance, to improve the atmosphere during games we could monitor the noise levels in the different stands, encouraging a competition between the South and North stands. Or digital signage that greets people by their name.”

“The important thing is, we already know more about our fans today than we did two years ago. That will continue to grow, and that will allow us to create new ways of engagement. We’re building a community.”



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