The Boyd Group

Largest Auto Repair Retailer in North America Chooses Aerohive for Unified Enterprise Wireless Network

Challenges

- Deploy unified wireless network across more than 250 repair and collision shops in North America
- Eliminate need for controllers and provide centralized network management
- Provide solution that can easily scale with simple management and configuration
- Provide resilient network to allow technicians to use wireless devices for all retail operations

Results

- Resilient and robust Wi-Fi solution across all retail and headquarters operations
- Greater efficiency and accuracy for all retail shop operations, now using wireless devices for corporate operations
- Centralized management through HiveManager Online to manage network from the cloud, with ease of configuration with zero-touch solution
- Cost-effective wireless architecture that can easily scale as the company expands

About The Boyd Group

In 1990, The Boyd Group Inc. opened its first autobody collision repair facility in Winnepeg, Canada and is the largest operator of collision repair centers in North America, with over 3,000 employees and more than 250 locations. The company operates in five Canadian provinces under the trade name Boyd Autobody & Glass and in 14 states within the U.S. under the names Gerber Collision & Glass, The Recovery Room and Autocrafters. In addition, the company is a major retail auto glass operator in the U.S. with operations in 28 states. The company also operates Gerber National Glass Services, an auto glass repair and replacement referral business with approximately 3,000 affiliated service providers throughout the United States.

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> **—Michael Wenham**
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> IT Administrator with the Boyd Group

With annual sales of over $430M, the company has grown through acquisition in recent years and looks to continue to expand its growth strategy in years to come. The company continues to be guided by the principles of customer satisfaction, continuous improvement and sound financial management that have influenced the company's actions since its inception.

Challenges

While the Boyd Group had Wi-Fi access at some of its locations previously, there was not a unified wireless solution across the entire company. The company did not have proper coverage in order to use wireless devices, especially with customer estimating procedures. In addition, the retail locations wanted to offer a guest network in its waiting rooms, as well as provide a captive portal page for greater advertising and marketing opportunities.

Over a year ago, the company deployed enterprise management software from CCC One, a provider of software, workflow tools and enabling technologies to the automotive claims and collision repair industry across its entire US operations. In Canada, the company uses different software solutions for its operations, from industry software providers Mitchell International and Audatex. The software offers capabilities for integrating tablets and other wireless devices and the Boyd Group wanted to switch to wireless devices in its daily operations, making a unified enterprise-class Wi-Fi network a more urgent requirement across all retail locations.

Beginning in 2004, the Boyd Group expanded its US footprint with the acquisition of Gerber Collision & Glass, followed by numerous additional acquisitions in the years to come. Today the company continues its growth strategy, opening an average of six new locations per year, with its most recent acquisition comprising 25 stores. With locations across a large span of territory in North America, and with a small IT team, the company mandated centralized remote management without controllers and a solution that could easily scale as the company grows. Since the company uses multiple software application solutions depending on the region, province or country, a flexible network architecture platform was paramount.

The Solution

Aerohive AP350 access points are deployed in each retail location across the US and Canada, with over 660 APs currently implemented in the collision shops. Each collision facility has approximately three APs, with particular care to ensure for no blackout spots due to the magnitude of heavy metal machinery located in each shop.

When the Boyd Group began to evaluate its network needs, it considered various vendors including Meraki, Meru and Aruba. The company then turned to Gartner for a technology analysis. Gartner positioned Aerohive as a Visionary in the 2012 Magic Quadrant for the Wired and Wireless LAN Access Infrastructure report, in part for Aerohive's innovative enterprise features and its differentiated approach to the market. Based on this insight, as well as a recommendation from a local school district in Manitoba running Aerohive successfully, the Boyd Group chose to implement Aerohive for its entire wireless architecture across all operations.

Although all operations were not yet wireless, the Boyd Group replaced what Cisco equipment it did have with Aerohive solutions. Without a need for controllers, it was much simpler for the company to roll out a wireless network across its entire operations, even deploying in less than four months from the start of the initial evaluation.

The wireless network connects back through an MPLS network to its main data center located in Youngstown, Ohio, that houses and manages firewall and content filtering, as well as managing its corporate intranet traffic. Aerohive APs are also deployed at its headquarters location in Canada, providing Wi-Fi for executives, the accounting team, and employees that operate mobile devices. Eventually the company wants to acquire additional mobile device management solutions in order to open up the network at headquarters to all employees.

HiveManager Online is used for all network management and control, giving flexibility to the IT teams based both in the US and Canada. As Michael Wenham, IT Administrator with the Boyd Group explains, "The HiveManager Online dashboard interface is very easy to use and customize, and we have especially benefitted from having a complete picture of our network at all times. Aerohive enables us to see which clients are connected across our network, what bandwidth concerns we might have, and troubleshoot any issues from an interference standpoint."

The Boyd Group has set up a guest network at each retail location. The company is utilizing guest-specific SSIDs and the captive web portal to manage guest access, allowing the company greater control and security through Aerohive's identity-based policy features.

After analyzing customer trends, the company determined the typical wait time is less than one hour, so the guest network connection is set to expire after one hour, which also ensures greater security for the company. The network access also terminates when shops are closed, and HIveManger Online makes it easy for the company to set a schedule for various time zones and locations.

The Boyd Group is also evaluating Aerohive BR100 and BR200 branch routers for use exclusively at new facilities. With its strong acquisition strategy and the increasing number of new repair centers opening each year, the company has a need for using Aerohive routers to quickly allow facilities to connect right away to the corporate network, especially when it can take a long time to install the necessary infrastructure at new retail locations.

The Results

When a typical customer now comes to a Boyd Group location, a technician can go out to the vehicle, input information and photos through a wireless device using software and applications that are directly uploaded to the corporate network for estimating procedures. Employees can now process the estimate car side before going back into the office to complete and print out the estimate for the customer. This has created greater efficiency and effective time management, as well as reduced customer wait time for every retail location.

Before the wireless architecture was in place, the company manually entered information for customer repairs. One particular area of greater efficiency and accuracy is with paint operations for the company. Now, thin clients are used to connect wirelessly to corporate management software to enter vehicle information, photos, and enter data for necessary paint and body work that communicates directly with the paint instruments. Information is collected faster and the wireless devices guarantee less error. Repair shops in the US will also begin to utilize the CCC One smart app through mobile devices in the upcoming several months for greater efficiency and convenience.

Customers can now connect to Wi-Fi through the guest network while they wait. The Boyd Group will soon take advantage of more Aerohive features to block content and capture customer data for marketing programs. The company hopes to offer coupons and other store specials for car washes or rust proofing via the captive Web portal to drive business and increase revenue, as well as leverage the retail analytic features available from Aerohive. Televisions positioned in waiting rooms may eventually be managed wirelessly through the network to push rotating advertisements.

HiveManager Online has transformed network operations for the Boyd Group. "Aerohive has given us the capability to implement enterprise Wi-Fi on a cost-effective basis. While in the past it was cumbersome to manage, Aerohive allows us to easily manage our network from one central location, which is key for our operations that span all of North America with a diverse set of requirements. I don't think we could have made a better decision," states Michael Wenham, IT Administrator.

Even before customers arrive, the company is able to manage its network more efficiently. In the past, the company installed costly controllers and spent more money to deploy staff or contractors to set up a new network location. Now, access points are configured from Canada and shipped directly to retail locations and a local managed services provider simply plugs in the Aerohive AP and connects. For newly acquired stores, the Boyd Group anticipates using Aerohive branch routers, along with mobile thin clients and Avaya wireless phone systems, enabling a new collision repair facility to be operational in much less time.

Up and Running

From its corporate board rooms, to its parking lots and customer waiting rooms, the Boyd Group has deployed a unified wireless network to enable greater efficiency for both employees and guests.

The Boyd Group is especially complimentary of Aerohive trainers and support teams, who provide more than just straight product information, but also educate IT staff about wireless technologies to ensure the enterprise network is operating optimally.

The company is now poised to manage and control all operations across its robust wireless network, and can easily add new retail locations as future acquisitions are made. As the company expands its use of Aerohive features, retail analytics and additional security features, it is well positioned to drive revenue and ensure consistent security policies, giving the Boyd Group a solid foundation to grow its wireless technologies in the years to come.