Folio Investing

Folio Investing Mobilizes its Workforce with Aerohive WLAN

Challenges

- Foster collaboration and productivity among employees
- Find a WLAN that could reliably support voice over Wi-Fi
- Provide a wireless guest network for visitors
- Reduce infrastructure costs by deploying wireless

Results

- Controller-less architecture resulted in significantly lower costs
- WLAN reliably handles bandwidth-sensitive applications e.g. voice over Wi-Fi
- Users no longer forced to connect and reconnect when moving within buildings
- Guests, or employees with personal devices, can securely access the internet

In a highly competitive industry, Folio Investing has made a name for itself by providing "a smarter way to invest." The online brokerage offers a flat-fee pricing plan, allowing investors to buy, manage and rebalance a fully diversified portfolio without ever paying trading commissions. For beginning investors, Folio Investing offers a series of pre-designed portfolios to help get started. The firm's online solution is a high-tech approach to investing that is used by thousands of retail investors and registered financial advisors.

About three years ago Folio Investing found itself in need of a technology upgrade at its corporate headquarters: It needed to accommodate its increasingly mobile workforce by deploying a company-wide wireless network. It needed a platform that was secure and that integrated wired and wireless networks.

The Challenge

Prior to deploying its first WLAN about three years ago, Folio was finding it challenging to foster collaboration and productivity among its employees. The open layout of its office-space encouraged collaboration, and employees were equipped with laptops. But the wired-only infrastructure hindered employees from working in a manner that was highly mobile. The company needed a network environment that would enable its employees to tote their laptops around the office and work together wirelessly on projects.

Also counted among its mobile workers were receptionists – they had been using mobile IP phones so they could leave their desks when necessary and perform multiple tasks for the firm. This led Folio to recognize the need for a WLAN that could reliably support voice over Wi-Fi.

"We are continually growing our business, and increasing our client base of investors and financial advisors. We are therefore looking to technology to help people to be efficient at their jobs. Moving around the office is key to making that happen," said Tim Reynolds, VP of Network and Infrastructure, Folio Investing.

There was also a major need to provide a wireless guest network for visitors. The goal was to find a secure solution that would let guests log into the wireless network while still securing them from corporate data.

Finding a way to reduce infrastructure costs was another motivator behind Folio's switch to an environment that would integrate Wi-Fi with its existing wired network. The company was facing an eventual move for its headquarters, and it was necessary to limit the amount of cable infrastructure the company had to purchase, or install, for the new location.

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>
> **—Tim Reynolds**
> VP of Network and Infrastructure, Folio Investing

"If we had kept a wired-only network, we would have had to completely redo the cable infrastructure when we moved locations," said Reynolds. "With Aerohive we were able to move headquarters and spend half the money because we only had to install half the cabling. This amounted to a very significant cost savings for us."

Adding to all of this, the company was experiencing an influx of Wi-Fi-enabled mobile devices. The company standardized on Android and iPhones for their corporate mobile infrastructure, as both technology platforms worked seamlessly with Aerohive's WLAN technology that supports 802.1x authentication, providing another layer of security for their wireless network access.

The Solution

Folio learned about Aerohive through its VAR Alliance Technology, while doing its due diligence in searching for a wireless network that would best meet its needs. Xirrus, Cisco and Aerohive were all considered, but Aerohive's controller-less architecture was hands down the best choice.

"Aerohive met all of our requirements – it was hands down the best in terms of cost and value add," said Eric LeSatz, VP of Technical Operations, Folio Investing. "From a cost perspective alone, Aerohive made the most sense because the cost of installing everything is modular with Aerohive. We avoided that big up-front cost you get with the controller-based vendors."

The Aerohive deployment started rolling out about three years ago, in the company's former office space. At that time Folio deployed the HiveAP 20 model of Aerohive's access points (APs). But when the company moved locations, Folio took the opportunity to upgrade to the 802.11n wireless standard and swapped its old APs for the HiveAP 320 802.11n models.

Folio worked closely with Aerohive during its wireless deployment. "During our search for a WLAN vendor, we worked with our reseller partner Alliance Technology. But for the actual deployment, we worked with Aerohive directly on issues such as the configuration, training and ramp-up," said LeSatz. "Aerohive was a huge help on a lot of those issues and that made the process go much more smoothly than anyone had expected it could."

The Results

Folio is benefitting from its Aerohive deployment across the board from reliability to ease-of-management, cost and the ability to meet security requirements after integrating its wired and wireless networks. And Aerohive's Cooperative Control Wireless LAN (WLAN) architecture is at the root of these benefits.

Aerohive's Cooperative Control architecture combines an enterprise-class AP with a suite of cooperative control protocols and functions that delivers the full benefits associated with controller-based

wireless LANs – but without the additional burden and cost of hardware controllers or an overlay network. Through the Cooperative Control WLAN architecture, the intelligence typically found within wireless network controllers is embedded within what Aerohive calls HiveAPs.

Not only has that controller-less approach to Wi-Fi enabled Folio to significantly cut costs – lower upfront costs and no expensive controllers to buy – the network is able to reliably handle bandwidth-sensitive applications such as voice over Wi-Fi. For example, the company is running Cisco's voice over Wi-Fi solution on its Aerohive WLAN, and it has loaded phone software onto employee laptops. People can answer a phone call or do video chat from anywhere in the building, thus avoiding time-consuming trips back and forth to their desk phones.

"The softphones work over both the wired or wireless network. This is a huge advantage to our employees who are now free to move around the office in order to collaborate on customer issues because they can make calls without interrupting what they are doing to go back to their desk and use the phone," said Reynolds.

Folio has also achieved seamless user mobility – users no longer have to connect and reconnect when they move locations within the building. Their experience accessing the network is transparent to the end user as they move from spot to spot.

Security and being able to give visitors guest wireless access were also important requirements that Aerohive has met. A guest, or employee with a personal device, can access the internet while remaining completely and securely segmented from the corporate Wi-Fi and wired networks.

Because management can be such a time consuming task, finding a centrally controlled solution was a top priority that was met by Aerohive.

"We wanted to be able to control and manage the Wi-Fi, and to troubleshoot any problems from a central location. We also wanted to be able to centrally manage and deploy APs and the process of providing updates to those APs. Aerohive's HiveManager is allowing us to do just that," concluded Reynolds.

By deploying Aerohive, Folio has caused its internal organization to match the efficiency of its savvy online investing platform. The company is working like clockwork from the inside out.