



Grant Thornton

Leading Accounting Firm Trades in Controllers for Flexible and Comprehensive Wi-Fi Solution from Aerohive

Challenges

- Move away from controller-based architecture to more flexible solution
- Provide reliable and robust Wi-Fi across 57 offices throughout United States
- Meet demands to support VoIP and video communications
- Segment network traffic to give priority to corporate-issued laptops

Results

- Robust Wi-Fi solution in all 57 offices and offshore service centers
- Increased mobility for employees, notably for audit staff
- VoIP and video communications now easily executed over Wi-Fi, with priority for corporate devices to ensure QoS
- Centralized network management saves time and expense for IT team

About Grant Thornton LLP

Grant Thornton is the sixth-largest public accounting firm in the United States and is the U.S. member firm for Grant Thornton International Ltd, one of the world's leading organizations of independent audit, tax and advisory firms. Founded in 1924, Grant Thornton has revenues of more than \$1.3 billion with approximately 60 offices throughout the United States with more than 6,000 employees.

The firm serves a variety of clients primarily in the middle market, offering services for tax and audit, and financial and advisory services. Headquartered in Chicago, Grant Thornton has specific areas of expertise including Sarbanes-Oxley compliance, mergers and acquisition, and tax and business valuations. The firm has

received a variety of recognitions as an employer of choice, including "Best Places to Work" by Crain's Chicago Business in 2013.

Challenge

Grant Thornton had a limited number of Cisco access points in place in only a handful of offices, but it needed to expand to offer ubiquitous coverage to meet the growing needs of staff and to provide a consistent wireless environment. With numerous offices across the entire United States, Grant Thornton required a solution with centralized management. The current Cisco network used a WLAN controller but it was slow and the firm was not using it for configurations, and in addition, the existing Cisco access points were becoming burdened and overwhelmed as the Wi-Fi needs grew at the firm.

Grant Thornton realized it desperately needed to move away from controllers and deploy a solution in which access points could work autonomously, especially critical with a distributed office environment.

The firm required a robust wireless solution to meet employee needs, especially for its auditors who often gather in small groups and teams and move around the office quite frequently. Grant Thornton also wanted a solution that could meet demands such as VoIP, as well as enterprise features for managing a guest network down the road. The firm also needed to segment and give priority to traffic within the firm, making corporate laptops the highest priority.

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—Jim Arner

Senior Network Engineer

Grant Thornton demanded a network solution that could handle voice and video since a majority of employees stream calls or conduct video conferencing over Wi-Fi. The firm has seen a great increase in BYOD and it mandated a solution to handle a large number of devices.

The Solution

Grant Thornton considered Cisco and Aruba for its network solution, but chose Aerohive for its controller-less architecture. Aerohive proved easy to work with and its licensing structure for renewal and management was ideal for Grant Thornton, something the firm had found very rigid working with Cisco in the past.

Grant Thornton rolled out its Aerohive network over three years due to its budgeting structure and to coincide with a previously planned switching replacement. The firm deployed Aerohive AP340, AP350, AP330 and AP121 access points, with over 500 APs across all office locations. The firm has three separate networks, one for corporate-issued laptops, another for mobile phones and a separate network for appliances and touch panels used in its media rooms.

"Aerohive's technology is top notch. With Aerohive, the wireless mesh topology allows for redundancy, so if we lose a link, the APs communicate with each other and ensure that there is no single point of failure on our network," explains Jim Arner, Senior Network Engineer at Grant Thornton.

Grant Thornton has taken advantage of Aerohive's QoS features to give priority to corporate-issued devices and to ensure that video and voice traffic are optimized. The firm is also beginning to utilize dynamic airtime scheduling for greater performance across the WLAN. The firm uses HiveManager on site, with two instances of the network management system in each of its two data centers.

Grant Thornton has a shared services center in Bangalore, India and has deployed Aerohive access points to enable its more than 300 employees to complete tax forms and other corporate activities, routing back to the United States through the Wi-Fi network.

The Results

Since deploying Aerohive, the office environment at the firm on appearance looks different. Employees are much more mobile and impromptu meetings happen much more frequently since staff do not have to hunt for a cable or sit down at a desk, but can access data and information from anywhere in the firm. There is a marked increase in tablet use and BYOD has grown tremendously, with the network on an average day supporting approximately 9,000 devices and 4,500 concurrent users.

Each office has a file room and employees use wireless bar code scanning software from Seagull Scientific to check files in and out to staff, a new functionality since the Aerohive implementation. Files must be strictly tracked for compliance reasons and wireless technology has streamlined the document lifecycle tremendously.

Grant Thornton uses Microsoft Lync for video conferencing, often consulting other subject matter experts within the firm, conducting training, and for face-to-face video conferencing. Before Aerohive, all video conferencing took place in conference rooms with video cameras. Now, all these activities have moved out to the desktop, with employees able to access MS Lync over Wi-Fi, enabling the firm to more easily pool resources and resolve issues. In addition, the firm is using Acme/Oracle Border Controllers to integrate Avaya call manager, MS Lync and SIP trunks, to tie all the pieces together and translate protocols.

The transition from a stand-alone controller to HiveManager has been seamless, and has given the small IT team a great amount of efficiency and control over the network. Now access points can self-register and the IT team can push out configurations remotely without having to touch the devices before they are shipped to new offices.

In addition, the firm is using Aerohive AP121 access points at offices where it has shared conferencing space, allowing guests and staff to access the Wi-Fi, turning access off and on solely for Grant Thornton use.

Firm Foundation

Looking ahead, Grant Thornton hopes to continue to take advantage of Aerohive's enterprise features like ID Manager, to expand its guest network and better understand users and offer a consistent guest experience.

While security features are not currently maximized through Aerohive, Grant Thornton does anticipate needing additional network security features, especially if the firm begins to process payment transactions over Wi-Fi and has increased demands for regulatory compliance.

"We wholeheartedly recommend Aerohive both for the value of the solution as well as the ease of overall management," states Senior Network Engineer Jim Arner. "From a technical standpoint, our wireless environment is very stable now, we enjoy much faster access and network speeds with better coverage and reliability, allowing Grant Thornton to be more efficient, more mobile and ultimately provide superior service to our clients."



Contact us today to learn how your organization can benefit from Aerohive wireless LAN architecture.

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