



Nicolet Bank

Nicolet National Bank Upgrades Wireless Network Architecture for Complete Mobile Banking Solution

Challenges

- Provide secure Wi-Fi at branch locations for employees and guests
- Upgrade current infrastructure to controller-less architecture
- Meet security and disaster recovery requirements with scalable network for future growth

Results

- Deployed secure and resilient wireless network including secure guest network for mobile banking
- Provided solution with no single point of failure to meet corporate requirements
- Achieved cost-effective wireless solution to scale with accelerated growth
- Implemented cloud network platform to easily manage branch locations

About Nicolet National Bank

Founded in 2000, Nicolet National Bank is a customer-focused community bank with 24 branch locations primarily throughout the state of Wisconsin. Headquartered in Green Bay, Nicolet National Bank is pleased to offer a wide range of financial services including commercial and consumer loans, banking services, wealth management and retirement plans.

Nicolet National Bank has been one of the fastest growing community banks in Wisconsin and offers localized, knowledgeable decision making designed to create long-lasting relationships within the community.

In 2013, Nicolet Bankshares, parent company of Nicolet National Bank, finalized its merger with Mid-Wisconsin Bank and its acquisition of Bank of Wausau, creating one of the largest community banks in the state to serve Northeast and Central Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan. With over 325 employees, and assets of approximately \$1.1 billion, Nicolet Bank is devoted to helping businesses and individuals achieve their financial goals through competitive solutions. Nicolet Bank values technology in order to facilitate efficient and secure customer service and extend quality tools and services to every customer.

The Challenge

Several years ago Nicolet Bank deployed a wireless network in its Green Bay headquarters location, choosing Cisco for the entire solution. Soon after the initial deployment, the company began to receive requests from its commercial lenders and other employees who often traveled among branches to offer a wireless network solution for the branch offices.

While Nicolet Bank was very familiar and comfortable with Cisco infrastructure, the company wanted a scalable and cost-effective solution as it was looking ahead to doubling its branch offices with the merger with Mid-Wisconsin Bank. The financial provider had seen some issues with Cisco and experienced some trouble with SmartNet firmware updates, so extending SmartNet to all its existing devices was not a viable option. In addition, with licensing requirements and a controller-based solution, the costs were rising if Nicolet Bank chose to upgrade its Cisco controllers. Since its initial implementation, the number and variety of devices at the company began to grow, and with a reduction in hardware costs for tablets and other devices, a Cisco-based solution was not financially practical for the company going forward.

The company needed a wireless architecture to allow commercial lenders to securely access large documents when away from office headquarters, including documents for loan committees and commercial borrowers. Nicolet Bank also required enterprise-class features that would allow for greater control and monitoring. In addition, the financial provider was finalizing its disaster recovery plan and needed to partner with a company that could provide expertise and insight for its IT operations.

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—Jon Biskner

Vice President of Information Technology

Nicolet Bank also wanted to offer Wi-Fi at its branch locations for customers which meant secure guest access. In the last several years, there has been substantial growth in mobile banking. As more customers are using smartphones and tablets, Nicolet Bank recognized the demand for Wi-Fi would only continue to rise. The company wanted a branch office solution that was simple to manage and would offer a secure environment for both lenders and customers.

The Solution

Nicolet Bank turned to local Aerohive reseller SynerComm, the 2012 Aerohive Partner of the Year for the central region, an IT solution provider specializing in network infrastructure and enterprise mobility. SynerComm urged Nicolet Bank to consider Aerohive for its network architecture. The company was impressed after several demonstrations of the features and capabilities from Aerohive, especially with the HiveManager interface. Nicolet Bank also spoke to several other local Aerohive customers, including the Green Bay Packers organization that highly recommended the Aerohive solution.

Nicolet Bank chose Aerohive for its network wireless architecture at its headquarters, all branch locations and its disaster recovery site located in Wausau. The company uses Aerohive AP110 access points, ideal for small retail environments where a single radio solution is sufficient. Nicolet Bank also deployed Aerohive AP330 access points in its headquarters location and where an enterprise-grade, high performance access point is needed for high capacity. The company uses HiveManager Online for cloud network management to set simple policy creation, firmware upgrades and centralized network management.

Enterprise-class features were a strong selling point for Nicolet Bank, including the monitoring and filtering features that allow the company to enforce rules on certain applications before they affect critical parts of the network, like Pandora, as well as allocate additional bandwidth to applications that specifically facilitate collaboration and communication among employees. Radio profiles are configured and modified to adjust power and facilitate fast roaming among APs.

Application Visibility and Control features from Aerohive are second to none and provided crucial functionality for Nicolet Bank, especially as the number of devices continues to grow and as the company is now offering a BYOD environment for guests and employees on the same infrastructure. This set of features enables the IT team to scale to support demand, and allows control for which applications are permitted, prioritized, or de-prioritized for access to different applications by specific users based on identity, device type, location, and time.

As Jon Biskner, Vice President of Information Technology at Nicolet National Bank explains, "A driving factor in our decision to choose Aerohive was their deep understanding of enterprise network traffic, providing greater awareness and control for Nicolet Bank. If Aerohive were compared to a highway, we not only knew how many cars were on the road, but we also knew the model, make and color. Aerohive enabled Nicolet Bank to truly achieve a secure network for our mobile banking environment."

Nicolet Bank now offers a BYOD services for employees at all 24 branch locations, with one secure network for corporate issued devices and another for BYOD, by using Aerohive's client management tools in conjunction with Aerohive's advanced flow-based firewall capabilities. This is essential for network management as the lines between corporate-issued and end user-owned devices often blur. The Aerohive solution allows for clear differentiation between corporate issued, BYOD, and other guest devices, streamlined and automated connectivity, management and monitoring, all on the same infrastructure. This is facilitated by HiveManager Online's ability to automatically create and install a unique client certificate and install a secure profile on each device using a single SSID.

Nicolet Bank is also using the integrated RADIUS server capability built directly into the Aerohive HiveOS operating system, available on all Aerohive access points. This was key for Nicolet Bank as it formulated its disaster recovery plan, consulting with Aerohive engineers on specific guidelines. The RADIUS server support allows for continuous network access even if the WAN connection is down, crucial for mobile banking business continuity.

On the firewall side, Nicolet Bank uses Palo Alto Networks, a network security company that works closely with Aerohive. The combination of security features from Aerohive and Palo Alto Networks, along with HiveManager Online platform management, has allowed Nicolet Bank to have complete awareness and control, easily monitoring and shaping both wired and wireless network traffic.

The Results

One of the biggest benefits Nicolet Bank enjoys with Aerohive Wi-Fi is empowering its employees for complete enterprise mobility. In addition, tablets are now a deployment mechanism, gathering information from customers at the branch location, while connecting to the corporate network using Aerohive Wi-Fi. Nicolet Bank now offers secure guest Wi-Fi access, including utilizing Nicolet Bank's own proprietary Apps, bankNow and depositNow, engaging customers in a seamless mobile banking experience at any branch location.

Another successful result is the reduction in paper use and cost for the company. Recent bank regulatory challenges now require more customer communication, and loan documents are traditionally lengthy and complex. Each Wednesday the bank conducts a meeting that typically would have produced 300 pages that was printed and mailed or distributed for each participant.

Since deploying Aerohive, Nicolet Bank has been able to digitize 75 percent of all previously printed reports, and employees can participate in the meeting from any location. Paper forms were eliminated, and meeting agendas and corresponding papers were issued in digital format. Boardrooms and community meeting rooms were connected wirelessly, with Apple TVs displaying and sharing meeting documents and eliminating the need for an additional wired network.

The additional documents loan officers need to access can now be downloaded or viewed through the corporate wireless network, or even securely with employees' personal devices through Aerohive's unique client certificate capabilities on the guest network.

As more and more devices are connecting to the network, Nicolet Bank is effortlessly able to ensure demands for bandwidth are managed, and ensure tools used for collaboration and communication at the bank are given highest priority on the network. Customer service from Aerohive has proved invaluable as Nicolet Bank outlined and finalized a successful disaster recovery plan. Aerohive products were easily and rapidly deployed, giving the company confidence to scale the network as it expands its branch locations with recent acquisitions.

Mobile First Banking

"Aerohive took us to the next level in our wireless network. With its enterprise features and capabilities, Aerohive is a game changer and has enabled our network architecture to meet the demands of mobile banking for today and beyond," said Jon Biskner, Vice President of Information Technology at Nicolet National Bank.

Aerohive cloud-enabled networking with distributed intelligence streamlines and automates connectivity, management, and monitoring to transform the Nicolet Bank network into a platform for mobility.



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

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