



Iowa Judicial Branch

Historic Landmarks and Older Building Sites Present Unique Challenges to Enterprise-class Networking that Wireless Can Easily Address

Requirements

- A wireless network that scales to include courthouses in 99 counties
- A controller-less network that doesn't restrict the number of access points
- A wireless network that's easy to install and configure by a small IT team
- The ability to work within the constraints of historic courthouses that limit the use of old-world networks

Results

- A wireless network that conquers the technology challenges of old, historic courthouses
- A fast, reliable network used by the public, clerks, attorneys, judges and more
- Advanced WLAN solution that provides centralized configuration and monitoring
- A highly scalable wireless network for the state judicial system that's both easy to manage and cost-effective

The Challenge

The state motto of Iowa—*Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain*—clearly shows that justice is something that Iowans hold near and dear to their hearts. One big entity in upholding that motto is the Iowa Judicial Branch.

But these days, it's not just about maintaining your rights and liberty. To truly administer justice, requires a cutting-edge, enterprise-class wireless network, especially if your employees are spread hither and yon. The Iowa Judicial Branch, for example, has about 1,700 employees across the state in 150 offices, with the majority of them online during business hours.

And when it comes to gobbling up the wireless, the employees are the tip of the iceberg. "We'll be adding an unknown total number of

public users as we roll out the public wireless," said John Hoover, Infrastructure Administrator for the Iowa Court Information Systems (ICIS).

All state court cases in all of Iowa's 99 counties are handled by employees of that organization. More specifically, the ICIS team provides technology and support to the Clerks Offices, Judges, Juvenile Court Officers and other staff for the branch in all of Iowa's counties.

The team has at least one office in each of these counties, with many counties having several offices, e.g. Courthouse, Juvenile Court Services Office, Magistrate's Courtroom, etc. The grand total is about 150 offices that need some level of WLAN support.

But like many older buildings and courthouses across the country, concrete or solid rock walls present a serious challenge to an ambitious IT team.

"It's very difficult for us to drill holes and run wire" in these old courthouses, Hoover said.

To further challenge the ICIS team, many of the courthouses around the state have been designated as historic landmarks. At a minimum, this complicates – and in some cases prevents – engineers from running additional wiring for LAN connections, Hoover said.

"There's been a few places where the local person thought we would need four access points in order to adequately cover everything, and we've been able to get it done with two or three."

—**Sally Thompson**
Iowa Court Information Systems
Infrastructure Administrator

The Goal

With more than 100 locations that will need to be covered by access points, the scalability and cost of an enterprise-class wireless network were major factors. "The ease of management was also a huge factor, as we have a small number of people responsible for our entire infrastructure. Configuration and management that required weeks of training classes was not something we wanted, could afford, or handle," Hoover said.

To solve these problems, the ICIS team is implementing an Aerohive system that allows citizens and attorneys to file court cases, and the items that go with them, electronically. What that means is, going forward, more often the attorneys may not have a paper copy of all documents with them when handling a case.

"We needed to provide a publically accessible wireless Internet connection to allow these users to access the online case records from the courtroom," Hoover said. "Eventually, we hope to have a solution that will provide secure public Internet access, as well as secure private LAN/WAN access for all the Judicial network users in our courthouses across the state."

The first phase is to roll out public-Internet-only access across the state, with the goal of staying ahead of the deployment of the electronic case filing in each county, he said.

"Depending on approval from our steering committee, we may begin the private WLAN phase at any point," he added.

Considering the Alternatives

In addition to Aerohive, the ICIS team considered several other alternatives. Aerohive's scalability, controller-less architecture and price points made it the clear choice.

The team has used another vendor at the datacenter in Des Moines but the number of controllers are based upon a number of access points, Hoover said. "So without knowing for sure how wide the project was going to end up ... it was difficult for us to try to say, OK, we'll need a controller that can support 100 or 200 or 500 access points, without overbuying or under buying initially."

Deployment

The Aerohive deployment began in the summer of 2011 and continues today. The IT team is currently deploying the HiveAP330 and they plan to start deploying the new BR100 Routers soon.

"The BR100, and possibly BR200, will be used to replace other devices in some of the smaller offices, as well as for some of our mobile/telecommute users, such as trainers and senior judges," Hoover said.

The ability to mesh Aerohive APs has also been a big selling point. In one Iowa county, Hoover was dealing with two old courthouses separated by an alley. He was able to network the two, without using costly, specialized bridge hardware.

The IT team uses the HiveManager Online for easy configuration, topology planning, network monitoring and more. Regarding HiveManager, Hoover said that it is "very easy to use from a basic standpoint, but still very powerful once you drill down."

When it comes to the invaluable help of a reseller, the ICIS team has been purchasing access points and routers from Aerohive partner Virtual Graffiti.

The Result

Sally Thompson, Iowa Court Information Systems Infrastructure Administrator, said she's been impressed with Aerohive's ease of setup and management, considering that, "I came into this with very little experience with wireless." When asked if he would recommend Aerohive to others, Hoover said, "Absolutely, yes. I've had nothing but good luck, personally."

"The coverage on the access points has been outstanding as well. There's been a few places where the local person thought we would need four access points in order to adequately cover everything, and we've been able to get it done with two or three."



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

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