



Drakes Supermarkets

Drakes Supermarkets maintains superior customer service with Aerohive Wi-Fi

Challenges

- Create a secure, stable and resilient network environment for multiple sites and locations
- Ensure compatibility with specialist supermarket mobile applications
- Deliver a solution that was timely and cost-effective to deploy, with minimum on-site maintenance

Results

- Centralised management and zero-touch deployment has significantly reduced deployment time and cost, and enabled quick problem resolution
- Mobile applications with high performance connectivity have increased staff productivity and customer service
- Reduced infrastructure costs as the wireless LAN architecture and its Access Points require no network controllers or overlay networks
- Significant RF improvements with no drop outs or black spots

About Drakes Supermarkets

In 1965, Roger Drake commenced his supermarket retailing career with the Coles Group. In 1974 Roger established his own business by purchasing his first store in Adelaide, South Australia. The company has since grown and now owns 57 stores throughout South Australia and Queensland, with a turnover in excess of \$1B and 5500 employees nationally. Drakes Supermarkets is the largest independent grocery retailer in Australia and specialises in supermarket retailing. In addition to their supermarket stores, the company operates a liquor store and several news agencies.

The company's strength lies in operating on the principles of a family business and supporting local manufacturers and suppliers. Roger prides himself on knowing as many of his staff as he can by name. He spends time every day out in his supermarkets, talking to

staff and customers alike, and always endeavouring to improve the level of service the company provides.

Despite its expansion, the company has managed to keep its focus on the important aspects of the supermarket business – THE CUSTOMER – by always striving to provide superior customer service. This is the company's competitive edge – along with its family values and South Australian roots. One of Roger's best-known sayings is *"I am not your boss, the customer is your boss, for without the customers, none of us would have a job!"*

The Challenge

The supermarket business relies heavily on accurate inventory control systems. A successful retailer will be able to accurately keep track of what products are selling well, and ensure that customers are satisfied with having what they want stocked on the shelves when they need them.

Handheld devices are therefore used for stock taking and ordering. Previously with these devices, the users were required to go back to the office to dock them in order for the updated data to be transmitted. Drakes Supermarkets required a system where updates could be done from the floor.

The network therefore also had to be robust enough to eliminate wireless dropouts and signal strength issues currently experienced – the most common complaint from stores.

"The solution has fitted our business model perfectly. It's reliable, more cost-effective than our previous solution, and the fact that we can manage all of these devices and Access Points from a central point is exactly what we were after."

—Rod Koza

Chief Information Officer, Drakes Supermarkets

Rod Koza (Chief Information Officer) said "We needed a wireless network that was stable and could deliver us confidence that black spots and dropouts would be something of the past. And with so many multiple sites to consider, any centralised management system would be hugely beneficial".

The Solution

Rod Koza came across Aerohive in his search for a wireless LAN network partner that could eliminate dropouts and help reduce IT overhead.

The rollout in 2011 covered 60 sites consisting of supermarkets, news agencies, head office and a liquor centre in both Queensland and South Australia, over a 2 month period. The Beachhead Group – an Aerohive specialist IT partner – worked closely on the network design and ran the successful deployment. Now that the network is established, ordering any new infrastructure is as easy and simple as ordering a new PC.

So simple in fact, no one in the Drakes IT team is required to manage ongoing installation. The plug-and play- capability means contract electricians can simply plug in the Aerohive Access Points and call to get the configuration required to get them live.

Aerohive AP330 Access Points (APs) are used in stores where just one unit is required. For a few stores Aerohive AP120's are used as secondary units. Also the Aerohive HiveManagerOnline Network Management System allows Drakes Supermarkets to limit the number of devices connected, whilst also securely managing what these devices can and cannot access. The number of users is configurable, allowing Rod and his IT team to ensure there are always at least seven devices connected at any one time.

The Results

With the Aerohive Wi-Fi solution now successfully deployed, Rod Koza and his team are so confident in their technology choice they have recommended Aerohive to other partners.

Since the deployment there have been no RF issues. And infrastructure costs are reduced – the Aerohive solution has been very cost-effective for Drakes with a reduction of IT hardware required per store.

And the ease of ongoing management has exceeded expectations. Updates are really easy to do using Aerohive HiveManager. The cloud-based solution with zero touch deployment means that Koza's team can centrally deploy and manage any additional APs and devices – all through the HiveManager. No need to travel to multiple sites anymore for either maintenance or deployment.

And in keeping with Roger Drake's focus on superior customer service, with the reliable Aerohive Wi-Fi network, Drakes Supermarkets can continue to deliver a friendly retail experience. Using Shop Easy applications by Gap Solutions, the latest applications are running over mobile – including Ezi-ticket in the new stores. So now the customer ticket number is displayed as 'now serving' on all scales, and displays as soon as one of the deli-team select that customer number for serving.

The resulting portability with PDA devices is a big boost in the supermarket industry too. The devices can go from Store A to Store B, and transmit to the back office without any reconfiguration. As Rod Koza remembers "previously at stock take time we'd have to get all devices in between the different stores".

Perfect Fit With The Drakes Supermarkets Business Model

As a first generation family business, Drakes Supermarkets has achieved great success in a market dominated by two retail giants. An increased focus on staff training and development, customer service initiatives, innovation and an expanded social media presence have been among the key factors to this growth. However, central to Drakes Supermarkets overall sales growth is the commitment to their customers, community, staff and suppliers.

And having an Aerohive Wi-Fi network, has supported this sales growth. The ease of deployment of the network makes it easy when new stores come on board - it's just part of Drakes standard infrastructure roll-out, as easy as adding a new printer.

"The solution has fitted our business model perfectly. The fact that we can manage all of these devices and Access Points from a central point is exactly what we were after. Two to three years ago I had to look at alternatives as what we had just wasn't working. I don't need to look at anything else now," confirms Rod Koza.



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

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