



Pet Supplies Plus

Retailer Pet Supplies Plus Chooses Aerohive for Cloud-Enabled Enterprise Networking

Challenges

- Deploy enterprise-grade wireless capabilities across numerous physical locations
- Provide resilient networking platform compatible with mission-critical retail and supply chain operations applications
- Deliver robust solution to scale with several phases of wireless implementation, both for corporate and field environments
- Provide industry standard network security capabilities

Results

- Successful enterprise-grade wireless network deployed, with unified user experience
- Cloud-based network management lessens IT staff requirements and lowers operating expenses
- Controller-less architecture allows no single point of failure, with superior uptime to access logistics applications

About Pet Supplies Plus

In 1988, the founders of Pet Supplies Plus came up with the novel idea of opening a supermarket-style pet food and supply store. More than 25 years later, and with more than 300 locations in 25 Eastern states, Pet Supplies Plus is the third-largest pet specialty retailer in the country and has earned the reputation as America's favorite neighborhood pet store by offering a wide array of pet food, goods, grooming services and animal expertise in a convenient, value oriented and fun environment.

The Challenge

In the last few years, Pet Supplies Plus has overhauled and upgraded many of its IT functions, including opening a new distribution center, closing two smaller distribution centers, upgrading Payment Card

Industry (PCI) security requirements, building a new cloud-based infrastructure, as well as hiring several new Information Technology professionals. The IT team was tasked to upgrade an existing consumer-grade wireless product to an enterprise-class wireless solution, capable of seamless network operations across its corporate office, distribution center, stores and data center hosting facility.

In itself, the distribution center presents a challenging environment for a wireless deployment. The distribution center physically covers over 760,000 square feet and wireless devices are located in many different areas both inside and outside the facility. Team members manage inventory and shipping functions wirelessly using phones and other thin clients, including Motorola hand held devices attached to team members' wrists.

The company also has a physical hosting facility located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, housing its data center, consolidated client infrastructure and running mission-critical corporate applications.

Adding to the complexity of this deployment was the geographic dispersion of all of the various locations. Since Pet Supplies Plus corporate office, or Pet Central, is located 30 miles from the hosting facility in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the distribution center is approximately 650 miles away in Indiana, and stores are spread across 25 eastern states, Pet Supplies Plus needed to be able to

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manage and troubleshoot the network remotely to maintain a balance of technology and appropriate staffing. To do so the company required a cloud-based infrastructure capability to minimize the number of IT team members required to maintain the network.

After the corporate office and distribution center deployment, Pet Supplies Plus expanded its wireless network to its retail stores deploying Aerohive's branch routers for wireless and VPN functionality. This deployment provided network segmentation to maintain compliance with forthcoming PCI requirements.

There was no question the company needed a flexible and resilient wireless solution. In a fluid retail environment, the IT team at Pet Supplies Plus continually evaluates its work processes, and looks to improve efficiency in any way possible. Since wireless would be a primary access layer at all corporate locations, an enterprise-grade cloud-based networking platform was essential. Given its ambitious plans, the company also required a controller-less solution, with no single point of failure that could easily scale without complexity.

The Solution

Pet Supplies Plus partnered with Aerohive reseller Interworks to implement and deploy Wi-Fi across all locations. Before choosing Aerohive, the company also considered other solutions but the cloud capabilities and scalable wireless networking platform from Aerohive proved superior.

As Miles Tedder, CIO and Chief Supply Chain Officer, explains, "Our IT team chose Aerohive because they provided everything we required for wireless networking— a resilient and cost effective network solution with robust features that could be easily managed remotely through the cloud. That combination exceeded our expectations."

The company chose a combination of Aerohive AP350 and AP170 access points for the distribution center. The AP350 is designed for challenging indoor settings like the distribution center where wireless devices are attached to forklifts and trucks and employees are communicating wirelessly as they navigate the facility. The Aerohive AP170 was also used in outdoor locations at the distribution center, chosen for its industrial outdoor strength and capabilities.

For the stores and corporate office the AP330 were used. The AP330s also provide wireless intrusion detection as required by PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard).

Most significantly, the IT team uses many of the features available in the HiveOS and HiveManager Online network management system, part of Aerohive's cloud services platform. The HiveOS built-in enterprise features provide higher performance at a lower cost, with cooperative control to support all network operations without the need for a dedicated controller, imperative for Pet Supplies Plus.

HiveManager Online allows the company to remotely analyze how it is using the network and monitor who is connecting, enabling the company to make changes and improve efficiency at any time. The cloud-based solution also minimized capital expenditures, with the flexibility to grow as the company opens additional distribution centers and stores in the future.

Guest access at any corporate location is controlled through Aerohive ID Manager, with fully configurable profiles and control to ensure maximum network performance. The company is able to integrate authentication for corporate users to allow access to a variety of directory services, while guests are monitored to control use and airtime and streamline the on-boarding of visitors.

Pet Supplies Plus is also taking advantage of enhanced security components available from Aerohive's wireless architecture, including 802.11i (WPA2) and Active Directory authentication where supported, as enforced through Aerohive APs.

The Results

Over the last few years Pet Supplies Plus assumed a major undertaking for its wireless network deployment, deploying to a new corporate office and hosting center, a new distribution center, and also implementing the new Aerohive wireless network across all stores.

Pet Supplies Plus has been impressed with Aerohive's customer service as well as the easy-to-use management tools as part of HiveManager Online. When Pet Supplies Plus recently needed to add additional access points and upgrade existing APs, Lisa Brown, Director of IT Services, and her team were able to perform these functions easily with zero-touch, eliminating the need to travel and be on site, and reducing operating expenses.

Aerohive's cloud-based platform has proved imperative for troubleshooting issues that arise with mobile devices. At the distribution center, up to 150 different mobile devices access the network at one time while also managing more than 300 store locations.

Overall, the success of the wireless network is mission critical. Since retail store connectivity and supply chain management operations are updated continually, the superior uptime and accuracy have proved crucial for Pet Supplies Plus. With a flexible and scalable enterprise network in place, the company has been able to react to changes easily. As the company expands, the cloud-based enterprise network will no doubt be essential and cost effective.

Wireless Networking Unleashed

Customers at Pet Supplies Plus are known as neighbors. Pet Supplies Plus prides itself by offering a premium neighbor experience so it's no surprise that store team members know the names of hundreds of their neighbors' pets and owners, offering a broad selection of pet supplies to meet a diverse clientele.

It's also no surprise that a company with this level of detail and care for its neighbors and their pets also aspires to competitive advantage across all areas of its operations. The upgrade to an enterprise networking solution from Aerohive has ensured Pet Supplies Plus can easily scale for future expansion and meet current and future PCI security requirements. The resilient and robust network allows the company to focus on efficiency as well as lessen operational headache and expense. By exploiting the offerings from Aerohive's wireless architecture and cloud-based platform, Pet Supplies Plus is well positioned to meet all future networking requirements.



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

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