



Rimi Baltic

Retail Giant Mobilises Workforce Across 236 Stores with Aerohive Networks

Challenges

- To standardise on a scalable, high performance wireless network across its operations, to enable employees to spend more time, and be more productive, on its shop floors.
- Sought to increase efficiencies and improvements in stock management, sales and customer experience through enabling wireless handheld clients for employees in 236 store locations
- Sought an alternative to a costly controller-based approach to in-store Wi-Fi, with architecture that enabled scalability and management across its distributed enterprise environment.
- Improve WLAN at its office locations, with added security and management features to enable guest access for visitors.

Results

- Provided the secure wireless foundation for workforce mobility, resulting in faster and more accurate stocktaking, whilst freeing up more time for a customer service focus.
- A controller-less approach enabled cost-effective scalability, providing all the benefits of resilience, without the additional cost and management overheads of controllers.
- Extended secure wireless to visitors using Aerohive's Private Pre-Shared Key (PPSK) functionality at its three office locations.
- Aerohive HiveManager Network Management System enables the IT team to manage the network centrally.

About Rimi Baltic

The Rimi chain of supermarkets started out in Norway in 1977 as "RIMI 500", and was acquired by the Swedish ICA supermarket chain in 1992. Rimi Baltic was established as a joint venture between Swedish ICA and Finnish Kesko Food in January 2005. Starting from 2006 Rimi Baltic is subsidiary company of ICA AB. Rimi Baltic is represented by three companies in the Baltic States: Rimi Eesti Food, Rimi Latvia and Rimi Lietuva. Rimi Baltic now employs more than 9800 people in 236 stores, in three countries and at three head offices.

Challenge

Rimi looked to standardise on a wireless network foundation across its operations, which would enable its employees to spend more time, and be more productive, on the shop floor. By mobilising the workforce across its 236 stores, the retail giant sought to increase efficiencies and improvements in stock management, sales and customer experience. Andrius Šemeškevičius has been IT Director for the last five years, responsible for overall IT delivery in the company. He explained:

"We decided to deploy wireless handheld SAP clients to provide the employees with a movable workplace so they could order goods and take stocks directly from their handheld device. The right wireless network was critical to this."

— **Andrius Šemeškevičius**
IT Director, Rimi Baltic

"We really didn't have a big problem to cure. The main objective was to provide mobility for employees in the stores – a new initiative. We think that employees should spend most of their time on the shop floor, rather than sitting in front of a computer somewhere in a back room. That time should be spent in the store front, making the stores look nice, helping customers, providing good service and so on. We decided to deploy wireless handheld SAP clients to provide the employees with a movable workplace so they could order goods and take stocks directly from their handheld device. The right wireless network was critical to this."

The wireless network at headquarters was standard, but the shop floor requirements needed some consideration, explained Šemeškevičius: "At headquarters, we have lots of meeting rooms and people working in the open spaces, and everyone needs access to their data on the move. That's kind of easy since we have only three office buildings in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. Enabling wireless in all our 236 stores for improved customer service and employee productivity, however, required a high-performance and scalable network infrastructure."

Solution

Rimi selected Aerohive following a tender process, where the retailer specified requirements and invited the largest players in the area. Šemeškevičius got to know about Aerohive because of its work within other large retailers, he said, "I subscribe to a few newsletters and saw some great case studies about Aerohive, in particular deploying a store network at 7-Eleven in the US very successfully. They knew the retail environment."

He continued, "We really liked Aerohive's on-line presentation of the solution, telling us about the architectural approach, software and management. We asked difficult questions and the team would answer them immediately; we were impressed with the professional attitude during the evaluation. Our selection process is guided by clear criteria, not only finance. We never sacrifice quality or security over finance, as a wireless network poses an additional risk for the company's infrastructure. On top of that comes TCO and running costs. Aerohive performed on all these counts."

Rimi found Aerohive unique because of its controller-less approach, providing all the functionality of the controller-based solutions, but with a significantly lower TCO and greater scalability.

"The network runs over 240 locations and we would have needed over 200 controllers for this," Šemeškevičius explained. "It's not just cost, all the controllers would take up space, need management and support, and replacement after some time. This did not offer the scalability we were looking for. We considered a hybrid approach of deploying the controllers at headquarters, but this would have overloaded the WAN with controller traffic. Instead, we opted for Aerohive, and their Cooperative Control Architecture. This meant we could have centralised management, with all the benefits of resilience and scalability, without the additional overheads of controllers."

Rimi deployed over 1,000 Aerohive Access Points (APs), consisting of AP120, AP121 and AP330s, across 236 stores and three office locations. The team also uses Aerohive HiveManager Network Management System, enabling the IT team to manage the network centrally.

Benefits

The WLAN has been in use for over a year and Rimi has experienced no major hiccoughs. According to Šemeškevičius, the system

worked as intended from the outset: "We have not had any issues, or any APs breaking down."

Aerohive provided support during implementation, sending an engineer to help with initial set-up, training and demos of the management tool. With such a large deployment, Rimi also found the Aerohive network-planning tool particularly valuable to scope out the implementation, as Šemeškevičius explained:

"The Aerohive planning tool, freely available online, was a great boon. You upload your building plans, mark out ceiling heights and building materials and so on, and the system calculates the number of APs needed and suggests their appropriate locations. For smaller shops we initially thought we needed four APs, but using the tool we found we needed just two. We were able to plan properly to ensure we had the right coverage in every store."

At its three office locations Rimi has also extended secure wireless to visitors using Aerohive's Private Pre-Shared Key (PPSK) functionality. "The PPSK has been very useful, enabling us to offer wireless access to visitors, making their traffic impossible to sniff," Šemeškevičius continued. "And all the 1000 simultaneous mobile shop users run on a wireless network with the latest enterprise level encryption technologies."

For Rimi, profitability is a whole chain of events: better customer service, more accurate stocks in the stores, the system being able to order the correct amount for the next delivery, means higher sales and greater customer satisfaction. That's a good return on investment for wireless deployment, explained Šemeškevičius:

"The biggest benefit is for our front of store employees not having to be sitting in front of their computers. Online stocktaking is faster, better and more accurate than working offline. It is also easy to make live goods receiving and returns online. It's an old saying that time is money, and it is true. Even more so, time, accuracy, and just being in the sales area, not in the back room, is money."

The system did exactly as we expected. That's the most important aspect. The solution meets our expectations, and we have had no disappointments. The WLAN has been in use for about one year and so far we haven't had any major issues. When it comes to system management some vendors had management consoles too tricky to manage for an unskilled person, because of too many options available. We think Aerohive has found the proper balance. We are still exploring all the solution's possibilities, and look forward to working further with Aerohive technology."

Read more at www.rimibaltic.com



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

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