ALYESKA RESORT

WORLD-CLASS RESORT DELIVERS WORLD-CLASS IN-ROOM WI-FI SERVICE

Alyeska Resort achieves 100% guest satisfaction with Zebra T5 Wi-Fi over VDSL2 System

OVERVIEW

Alyeska Resort is the largest ski area in Alaska, well-known for its steep terrain and deep snowpack. Situated in the heart of Girdwood, less than 30 miles from Anchorage, this gem of a resort boasts sweeping views of majestic mountains and ocean inlets, and is the home of many activities in addition to downhill skiing, including Nordic skiing, snowshoeing and dog-sledding. Renowned for its luxurious accommodations and for delivering the ultimate in guest comfort, when guests complained about Wi-Fi service availability and performance, the hotel sought a solution that would deliver the stellar level of service for which they are famous.

THE CHALLENGE:

Delivering high-speed Wi-Fi service throughout every inch of the facility — from the guest rooms to the pool

Long before the Internet and Wi-Fi were mainstream, this prestigious hotel provided complimentary Wi-Fi service in public areas, such as the hotel lobby, and wired Internet connections in the guest rooms. But as the Internet and Wi-Fi became part of everyday life, the existing solutions were unable to accommodate the increasing number of devices and bandwidth requirements or guest expectations for pervasive Wi-Fi availability — yet required a great deal of time and cost to support.

The wired Internet connections in the guest rooms generated volumes of support calls from guests who weren't able to connect, sometimes for reasons as basic as a cable that was incorrectly inserted into the wallplate. There were so many issues that a flow chart and pages of detailed instructions were created and distributed to ensure that the hotel staff had the information needed to help resolve the many daily support calls. Not only were guests frustrated, but hotel staff productivity was also impacted — the time workers spent troubleshooting Internet connection issues could have been better spent serving guests. In addition, there were often two or more travelers staying in one room, each with their own laptop, unable to connect simultaneously.

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> **Martin Cassens,**
> **Director of Information**
> **Technology, Alyeska Resort**

When guests began to carry smartphones and tablets in addition to laptops, these devices could not connect to the Internet in the room because of the lack of any wireless options. In addition, the increase in number of devices per person quickly overwhelmed the existing Wi-Fi network in other areas of the, resulting in poor wireless performance.

The result? Every guest that stays at the hotel receives a survey questionnaire after a visit — and every week, guests complained about the lack of wireless connectivity in the guest rooms.

THE SOLUTION

This prestigious hotel didn't just need a solution — Martin Cassens, Director of Information Technology at the Alyeska Resort, was searching for the best solution, one that would provide a superior wireless experience on every mobile device, regardless of whether guests were in their rooms or in public areas.

Cassens teamed with ExtenData in the search for the right in-room wireless solution, and found it in Zebra WLAN infrastructure — the T5 Wi-Fi over VDSL2 system, plus AP 7161 802.11a/b/g/n MESH outdoor access points and AP 5131 standard access points.

Dependable high-speed in-room Wi-Fi

The T5 system allowed the Alyeska Resort to easily provide every guest room with high-speed wall-to-wall Wi-Fi coverage, with plenty of bandwidth to ensure superior wireless performance, regardless of how many devices may be in use in a room — or in the hotel. The T5 solution couldn't have been easier to deploy. Since the unique in-room T5 Wi-Fi over VDSL2 architecture uses the existing telephone wiring and is compatible with the existing telephony and data network equipment, the solution is highly cost effective — there was no need to rip and replace existing wiring, the existing PBX or the in-room telephone.

- First, six TS-524 Wi-Fi over VDSL2 switches were installed in the IT equipment room, connected between the existing PBX and the existing guest room telephone connections.

- Then, approximately one-third of the existing phone jack wall plates in some of the guest rooms were replaced with an 802.11a/b/g/n TW-511 Wall Plate access point — a task that took just minutes per room, and required only a screwdriver. The TW-511 delivers high-speed 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi service in the room in which it is installed, as well as several of the surrounding rooms — which is why only 100 TW-511s are required to provide more than ample coverage for all of the hotel's 304 rooms.

- The integrated RJ11 port enabled the re-connection of the wired deskphone in a split second. And the two integrated Ethernet ports provide a wired connection option for any Ethernet-enabled device, paving the way for the hotel to deploy digital televisions, as well as an alternative wired in-room connection for guests who may need it.

- Last, the TW-510 wallplate provided an inexpensive means to add a high-speed Ethernet port in rooms that were already covered by adjacent 802.11a/b/g/n TW-511 in another guest room. Since the TW-510 also has an integrated RJ-11 port, installation was just as simple as the TW-511.

Beyond the guest rooms: Extending high-speed Wi-Fi throughout the hotel complex

With the guest rooms covered, Cassens turned his attention to the remaining floors and the staff working in the outlying buildings on the property. While the T5 Wi-Fi over VDSL2 solution was designed specifically to provide high-speed in-room Wi-Fi service, this flexible solution was also deployed in the first three floors of the hotel, where it provides high-speed Wi-Fi service to guests and hotel staff in the pool area, spa, restaurant, retail shops and banquet rooms as well as administrative offices.

That left the outlying buildings on the grounds — the maintenance shop and the grounds buildings. Older copper cabling connected the maintenance shop to the corporate network, while there was no connection to the grounds building. Since the cabling to the maintenance building had been cut and spliced multiple times to accommodate the expansion of the property, even rain and snow could cause a disruption in service. Alyeska wanted to provide a reliable network connection to both outlying buildings, but laying fiber was a very expensive proposition, which would have required digging trenches a few miles long. Instead, Zebra rugged AP 7161 802.11n outdoor access points were deployed to provide the point-to-point link to each building. Says Cassens, "It couldn't have been easier to wirelessly connect our outlying buildings — they were up and running in just a few hours. And since the AP 7161 is designed for the harshest weather conditions, it provides a rock solid and dependable high speed 802.11a/b/g/n point-to-point link, even in heavy rain, snow and bitter cold."

> "The best testimonial comes from our guests' silence. Before we implemented the Zebra WLAN solution, literally everyone was talking about the Internet because of its poor performance. Now, no one is talking about it because it simply works...and works really well."
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BENEFITS

Cassens comments, "The benefits of our wireless solution start with the guests and trickle down to touch everyone in the resort — guests and hotel staff."

Benefits include:

- 100% guest satisfaction with wireless Internet service. Says Cassens, "The best testimonial comes from our guests' silence. Before we implemented the Zebra WLAN solution, literally everyone was talking about the lack of wireless connectivity in the guest rooms. Now, no one is talking about it. Not only does it work flawlessly, we can guarantee that every guest will have the bandwidth required for a superior wireless experience, regardless of whether they are in the lobby or in their room, how many devices are in use in the room — or how many devices are on the network."

- Superior flexibility and investment protection. Says Cassens, "In the hotel business, it's all about serving guests. This extremely scalable and flexible solution can grow with us to help us better serve our guests. Not only can we meet the wireless needs of our guests for many years into the future, but this same WLAN infrastructure can allow us to deploy wireless solutions to help improve the productivity of our own workforce —and enable our workforce to better serve our guests."

• Dramatic reduction in network management time and cost. The resort's previous wireless infrastructure required highly skilled, certified IT personnel. By contrast, the Zebra WLAN solution is simple to manage. All WLAN infrastructure is managed from a single centralized location; and equipment is automatically discovered and provisioned, eliminating the need for any hands-on configuration. Network and device status and statistics are easy to monitor, allowing the hotel to uncover and resolve problems before they have a chance to reduce wireless service levels. Says Cassens, "With these management tools, troubleshooting is so easy that, if we had the same number of issues we had with the previous system, we could resolve the issues in much less time. However, the system is so reliable, there hasn't been anything to troubleshoot."

• Increase in staff productivity — more time to tend to guest needs. Onboarding is so easy that guests virtually no longer need support. Instead of lengthy configuration processes, users just simply log on to any browser. They are then automatically re-directed to a page where all they have to do is simply check a box to accept the terms and conditions associated with connecting to the hotel WLAN. No more instruction manual — three pages of configuration instructions were reduced to three sentences. The result? Hotel personnel have

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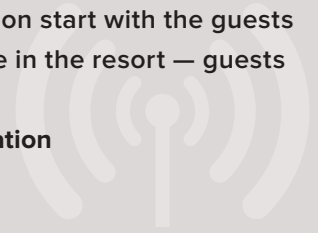
more time to spend caring for guests instead of troubleshooting network connection issues.

FUTURE WIRELESS PLANS

Currently, the hotel is in the process of deploying a wireless solution that will help improve the productivity of the housekeeping and maintenance staff, as well as the guest experience. A wireless asset management application on a mobile computer will allow the housekeeping and maintenance staff to receive wireless work orders within seconds of a guest request. So whether guests simply need more towels, or have a problem with the in-room heating or TV, the hotel will be able to satisfy every request quickly, improving guest satisfaction and retention rates.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN PROVIDE YOUR GUESTS WITH HIGHLY COST-EFFECTIVE, HIGH-PERFORMANCE IN-ROOM WI-FI SERVICE, PLEASE VISIT US ON THE WEB AT WWW.ZEBRA.COM/WLAN.