

CASE STUDY



OVERVIEW

Snowbird is a resort located in the mountains some 25+ miles east of Salt Lake City, Utah. With a year-round population of only about 50, Snowbird hosts nearly 1 million visitors in its hospitality facilities in addition to a number of major sports and entertainment events annually.

REQUIREMENTS

- A replacement for their existing, under performing wireless network
- A reliable wireless network to service the expanding guest needs for wireless network access
- A network that could grow to support exploding bandwidth and capacity demands from increasing numbers of visitors

SOLUTION

- Deployed 340 Ruckus ZoneFlex 802.11ac indoor and outdoor access points in multiple hospitality and convention facilities.
- Installed two ZoneDirector 3000 (N+1) controllers.

BENEFITS

- A resort facility that reliably sustains a few thousand active daily users—year-round.
- Satisfied the live high-definition (HD) Wi-Fi bandwidth requirements for application driven users
- Built a network that is able to easily grow as their resort business grows

BETTER CUSTOMER SATISFACTION THROUGH BETTER WI-FI

Looking to stay connected while vacationing at your favorite resort? Whether its winter or summer, ski season or fishing season—people today want to be able to stay connected to the world. Social media has become the ultimate platform to let friends and family know what you are doing at all times. Guest experience is the number one concern for all resorts. That means a reliable Wi-Fi network must be in place to keep the guest experience at a top notch level.

CHALLENGE

Located in the mountains some 25+ miles east of Salt Lake City, Utah, Snowbird resort hosts nearly 1 million visitors in its hospitality facilities in addition to a number of major sports and entertainment events annually. People come from all over the world to visit Snowbird, which has become a magnet for not only ski buffs but fishermen, general sports enthusiasts and music aficionados. Snowbird is a year-round attraction where visitors expect to be connected like they are at home. Its legacy infrastructure was not providing the needed coverage as more mobile devices were hitting the network. This was becoming a problem within the overall guest experience. Guests were complaining about the lack of coverage and the satisfaction rate was low. Those visiting Snowbird are cosmopolitan world travelers with a common demand: reliable Wi-Fi.

SOLUTION

Turning to partner GX2 Technology for help, the first step was to identify and deploy a new wireless network that could provide a reliable, high-performance indoor and outdoor Wi-Fi service linked into a fiber network infrastructure. After evaluating several different vendors, Snowbird found that Ruckus best met the resort's requirements. They deployed a Wi-Fi network that covered all the public buildings at Snowbird including the four hotels with 900 guest rooms, the Snowbird Center, all the mountain restaurants as well as the newest summit restaurant at 11,000 feet. To ensure reliable connections to the Internet, Snowbird also installed a fiber backbone for guaranteeing high performance and reliability of the Wi-Fi service.

"Snowbird's buildings are constructed to withstand avalanches, not transmit Wi-Fi efficiently. To ensure our design would meet Snowbird's expectations, GX2 did RF testing with streaming video to best simulate guest usage. This gave Goluskin the reassurance that his customers would be satisfied. Guest satisfaction rates are now consistently above 90 percent," stated LeAnn Hait of GX2 Technology.



“When our guests started showing up with multiple devices per person and they all wanted to stream video, our Wi-Fi network couldn’t keep up. Our guest satisfaction rates were dipping down below 50 percent at times.”

BRUCE GOLUSKIN

IT manager

The Wi-Fi network now consists of some 340 Ruckus access points (R700, R710 & T300) that are interconnected in the network and controlled using a dual-ZoneDirector 3000 (N+1) configuration that provides redundancy in the unlikely event of hardware failure.

On any given day, there can be more than 2,000 users active on the network. Some 31 percent of the traffic is high-definition (HD) video which can be from streaming services or live HD video streams. In any given month, there can be over 60k devices on the network.

“Since our initial installation, Snowbird has worked with GX2 to go beyond the basic Wi-Fi coverage in their hotels, to provide a customized ski pass-checking system on the mountain, video content walls and Wi-Fi to support table-side ordering and wine lists using tablets in their restaurants,” comments Hait.

THE BENEFITS

Once Snowbird deployed the network, the resort saw immediate benefits:

1. Customer Wi-Fi satisfaction ratings rose from below 50% to above 90%.
2. Reliable access was achieved in high density areas where there had been coverage problems with the previous Wi-Fi solution..
3. The confidence in the conference sales and operations team rebounded because of the reliability of the new Wi-Fi network and improvement of high client density access. Corporate customers are now rebooking conferences at Snowbird because of the improved Wi-Fi performance.

“Wi-Fi was a huge thorn in my side that negatively impacted our guest satisfaction rating. Now, it enhances our overall guest satisfaction rating.” comments Goluskin. “Snowbird is now a very happy customer.”

WHAT'S NEXT?

The network continues to grow both in in-building coverage and in bandwidth delivered. The next upgrade for the Snowbird Wi-Fi system will be migrating to Virtual SmartZone with an increased number of 802.11ac Wave 2 access points. Snowbird is exploring plans to encourage carpooling and ride-sharing with a proposed Wi-Fi application implemented in their parking lot.

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