Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

Showground
SYDNEY
Sydney Olympic Park

Objective
Instal Wi-Fi as a platform for other technological developments to increase competitiveness

Approach
Conducted a competitive tender and engaged Aruba with HPE Pointnext Services for a previous contract. Sydney Showground was happy with the results so returned to these suppliers.

IT matters
- Blanket, high-density Wi-Fi coverage with rapid download speeds
- Ability to capture user contact information and network usage data
- Platform for innovations such as cashless environment, IPTV, digital signage and stadium application

Business matters
- Forecast revenue increase of 30 to 40% over 10 years
- Improved customer experience and increased competitiveness
- Support for direct mail, advertising and other promotional activities

Sydney Showground uses Wi-Fi to underpin ambitious development plans

HPE Pointnext Services and Aruba support bright future for leading event venue

The commercial arm of the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales, Sydney Showground runs one of the city's principal business event and stadium complexes but faces strong competition from newer government stadiums. It engaged HPE Pointnext Services and Aruba to instal Wi-Fi as a platform for other new technologies and is embarking on a five-year road map to increase competitiveness.

Challenge

Need to keep pace with competitors
The Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) of New South Wales is a not-for-profit organisation committed to supporting Australia's agricultural development and rural communities. Founded in 1822, it is one of the oldest organisations in Australia but through its commercial events arm, Sydney Showground, its sights are firmly set on the future.

RAS operates from the Sydney Showground 30-hectare site within Sydney Olympic Park where Giants Stadium and 22 other exhibition halls, meeting rooms and pavilions host 1.7 million visitors at over 100 major events a year. The 30,000 square metres of exhibition space accommodate some of the nation's largest consumer and trade shows, as well as sporting events, conferences, dinners and music concerts.

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> "From an overall business perspective, we are working on a 5-year master plan to upgrade our whole 30-hectare site and we hope to deliver this alongside HPE Pointnext."
>
> – Darryl Jeffrey, Chief Operating Officer, Sydney Showground

Sydney Showground engaged HPE Pointnext Services and Aruba to instal Wi-Fi as a platform for the introduction of other new technologies and is embarking on a 5-year plan to increase competitiveness.

The high spot of the year is the annual Sydney Royal Easter Show (SRES). The largest annual ticketed event in the southern hemisphere, it attracts some 900,000 visitors over 12 days and contributes about 55% of annual revenue for redeployment into the agricultural community.

With a capacity of 24,000, Giants Stadium is the only non-government arena in Sydney and faces intense competition from many other large venues.

"The government is building new stadiums or renovating the stadiums it already owns and since our venue is a bit older, we need to make sure that it remains contemporary in terms of technology. It must be kept up to date to match customer expectations and to be competitive," says Head of Project Development, Jonathan Seward.

Installing Wi-Fi in the stadium was a major requirement and the availability of high-density public Wi-Fi was a stipulation when Sydney Showground recently won the rights to host matches for the women's T20 World Cup in 2020. Keen on the potential tourism and economic benefits, the New South Wales government agreed to fund the Wi-Fi solution with an AUD $2.9 million grant.

Solution

High-density Wi-Fi and 5-year road map
Following a competitive tender in 2016, Sydney Showground had engaged HPE Networking subsidiary, Aruba, and HPE Pointnext Services to instal robust Wi-Fi in its 30,000 square metres of major commercial exhibition halls.

"We were very satisfied with the Aruba solutions we already had in the halls and we were also comfortable with their pricing so we were happy to go straight to them again," says Seward.

To provide blanket 2.4 GHz and 5.0 GHz Wi-Fi coverage across both front and back of house, HPE Pointnext Services installed some 330 Aruba wireless access points including AP-374, AP-315 and AP-377 models. Aggressive roaming profiles ensure that users are always connected, even when walking around, and the solution also features Aruba ClearPass for network visibility and access control with Aruba AirWave network management.

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> "I was not aware of any issues when we started to use the Aruba Wi-Fi and the download speeds were phenomenal throughout."
>
> – Jonathan Seward, Head of Project Development, Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales

"They allow us to control the system and capture data and IP addresses so we understand who is using the Wi-Fi, how much they are using it and when the peak times are," says Seward. "The system also reports faults and helps us to understand how the network is working and whether it's operating at an optimum level.

"During the design and implementation, HPE Pointnext was easy to deal with and worked well with our preferred cabling company, ARA Electrical."

Benefit

Improved user experience
It was a smooth launch when the Wi-Fi system was first used for the Sydney leg of the HSBC World Rugby Sevens and for two AFL games featuring Greater Western Sydney Giants. It was also used to run the point-of-sale systems for the 2019 SRES.

Installing Wi-Fi in the stadium is just the first of many future technology improvements in which Sydney Showground hope to involve HPE Pointnext Services.

"We are working on a significant undertaking for the NSW government to invest in new facilities including a new convention centre, hotel and upgrades to existing pavilions," says Chief Operating Officer, Darryl Jeffrey.

"We will need to have state-of-the-art technology through all of those facilities and we will need to work with a partner to achieve that. We will absolutely be talking to HPE Pointnext about this."

Sydney Showground plans to implement Wi-Fi across its whole site and will piggy-back off that to invest in other technologies. Digital signage and information kiosks will bring advertising and promotional opportunities, as well as provide directions and information for visitors to the large showground site. New PA systems and LED advertising racks are on the cards and the organisation is also using its Aruba Wi-Fi as the platform to instal a new IPTV system throughout the stadium.

Visitor experience will also be improved by a stadium application that can be customised to tell them which gate to use, where to find their seat, enable food and merchandise to be ordered from the seat and even provide information for their homeward journey.

When users log on to the Wi-Fi system, Sydney Showground can capture their IP and email addresses to use in direct mail promotional campaigns, and clients who hire the facilities can enjoy the same benefit.

Customer at a glance

Hardware
- Aruba AP-374, AP-315 and AP-377 wireless access points

Software
- Aruba AirWave
- Aruba ClearPass

HPE Pointnext Services
- HPE Network and Mobility Consulting Services

"Another key element for the future is to have a cashless point of sale system," adds Jeffrey. "We trialled the cashless environment at the SRES and we could not have done that without the Aruba Wi-Fi.

"There are huge benefits from the work we are doing because it makes us comparable with other Sydney venues. We don't want to be the only venue that doesn't have high-density Wi-Fi because it is now an accepted solution at public venues."

As well as investing not-for-profit money into agriculture, RAS and Sydney Showground already generate between AUD $600 million and AUD $700 million of economic impact to the state and using new technology to boost competitiveness spells a bright economic future.

Jeffrey concludes: "If we go ahead with the upgrades in our five-year plan, we forecast that revenue will increase by between 30% and 40% over a 10-year period."

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