

## New Communications System Improves Operations for Pro Baseball Team

Grand Prairie AirHogs use Smart Business Communications System to improve guest services and streamline operations.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### GRAND PRAIRIE AIRHOGS

- Industry: Sports and Entertainment
- Location: Grand Prairie, TX
- Number of Employees: 15 full-time employees

#### CHALLENGE

- Provide a superior fan experience to improve customer loyalty
- Streamline business operations for a mobile, dynamic workforce

#### SOLUTION

- Integrated voice and data solution on a single, secure, manageable network

#### RESULTS

- Improves fan experience through simplified food ordering
- Increases operational efficiency and cuts costs with inventory management
- Enhances staff communications

### Challenge

The Grand Prairie AirHogs are the latest franchise in the American Association of Independent Professional Baseball. This exciting new team prides itself on competitive play, and reached the American Association Championship series in its debut season. The AirHogs make their home at QuikTrip Park, a state-of-the-art facility in Grand Prairie, Texas, that hosts not only baseball, but more than 150 events a year, including boxing, car shows, and philanthropic events.

“We have a full restaurant and sports bar called Whiskey Charlie’s, as well as a team store that offers a variety of sports merchandise,” says Roger Christoff, managing partner of Ventura Sports Group, owner of the AirHogs. “We also have a 17,000-square-foot Kids Zone with sports and outdoor activities, as well as luxury suites.”

To deliver a superior entertainment experience that keeps fans coming back, the AirHogs needed to offer their guests the highest level of hospitality. The team wanted to make it easy for fans to order food, beverages, and other services. Management wanted to improve communications among a highly mobile staff, so that employees could be responsive to customers and colleagues even when they were roaming around the ballpark. The franchise was also seeking ways to streamline its operations to keep costs under control.

Like most businesses, the AirHogs depend on communications to keep day-to-day operations running smoothly. To meet its business challenges, the team needed a network solution that could handle all of its phone, messaging, and data communications from day one. The solution would have to be easy to manage and use, yet flexible to grow and change as needs changed over time.

### Results

After considering several options, the AirHogs built a network foundation based on the Cisco® Smart Business Communication System. Designed specifically for the needs of small and medium-sized businesses, the Cisco Smart Business Communications System lets companies bring together all their voice, video, data, and wireless communications on one secure, manageable

platform. The result is a complete communications solution that is helping the AirHogs improve the fan experience, increase revenue, cut expenses, and make the business operate more efficiently.

In the ballpark's luxury suites, visitors receive better, faster service by ordering food directly from Cisco Unified IP Phones. A quick push of a button on the phone's color display brings up a complete menu of food and beverages.

"Fans simply touch the screen and their order is delivered directly to the kitchen," says Christoff. "We're saving time and increasing accuracy because the customer is actually placing their order right over the phone."

Making self-service ordering available to guests has also helped employees at the ballpark be more productive.

"Traditionally, we had one waitress who was responsible for serving two suites," says Christoff. "Now we have one waitress that can work four suites, so the solution has been a great benefit to us."

The phone solution runs over the team's Cisco network and works hand in hand with its inventory and supply software. Because communications are all running over one network, tracking sales, restocking, and managing inventory are simple.

"It's very easy for us to track what's being ordered and sold at the ballpark," says Christoff. "If cotton candy is not selling at the suite level, then we can change our menu to switch to caramel corn or something that's different."

The Cisco solution also helps the team keep its busy ballpark employees connected to colleagues and fans, no matter where they are working.

"It's a huge asset to the daily routine, simply because when you're running around a stadium all day long, you miss out on lots of phone calls, emails, and voicemails," says Tim Savona, assistant manager for the AirHogs. "The Cisco solution lets you bring your office phone with you, so you can handle every issue as it comes in. I never thought a phone would matter, but it really makes the job easier, and saves a lot of time."

Managing the network is more cost-effective as well, because all of the team's phone and data runs over a single Cisco network.

"I feel very comfortable with Cisco, because we already have Cisco equipment in our closet. We all know that equipment works better together connected with the same brand, rather than using equipment from several different manufacturers," says Christoff.

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**– Tim Savona, Assistant Manager, Grand Prairie AirHogs**

## Solution

The Cisco Smart Business Communications System is much more than simply a phone system; it's a platform for powerful applications designed specifically for the team.

"What really sold me on the solution was the fact that I could add all these applications onto the phone," says Christoff. "They make the Cisco phones that much more powerful."

The team worked closely with IPcelerate, a technology company specializing in voice over IP applications, to create customized software for its phones. Visitors can order food or drinks using the phone displays, request a waitress, or view a team roster. The software solution not only provides guest services, but also supports and automates key business processes, all running over the secure Cisco network.

"We have alerts on each phone that are tied to employee procedure manuals," says Christoff. "For example, on game days, the general manager of our sports bar will receive an automated message to confirm that the kegs are full. By punching in his code, he is acknowledging that the sports bar is ready for business."

The AirHogs also use IPcelerate software to turn their network into a direct marketing system. Using its database of cell phone numbers, telephone numbers, and email addresses, the team can distribute information about promotions and special events using email or text messages.

"Our Cisco solution has become a very valuable tool for us to market our team out to our fan base," says Christoff.

Managing and modifying the solution are simple, because Cisco Unified IP Phones are plug-and-play devices that make network moves, adds, and changes easy. This feature is especially important for a workforce that often roams throughout the stadium.

"The general manager wasn't here one day, so I had to fill in for him as well as manage the bar," says Savona. "I brought my Cisco phone down from my office, plugged it into the bar, hooked up my computer, and did my job from that location all day."

## Next Steps

The Cisco Smart Business Communications System has quickly unlocked major business benefits for the AirHogs. When the baseball season ends, the team will work with its Cisco partners to explore new software tools to tap the full potential of its flexible solution.

"One of the things we're going to do is sell ads on the telephone," says Christoff. "The fact that our phones have color displays makes them a potential revenue source. I can add a scrolling ad or promotions to the phone; there's really no limit to what we can put on this device."

## For More Information

To learn more about Cisco solutions for small business, visit <http://www.cisco.com/smb> or contact your authorized Cisco partner <http://www.cisco.com/go/partnerlocator>.



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