

Premier NBA Arena Becomes Mobility Leader

Memphis Grizzlies improves FedExForum guest experience, staff productivity, and leadership with Cisco Unified Wireless Network.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES—FEDEXFORUM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports and entertainment • Memphis, Tennessee, United States • 250 employees
<p>BUSINESS CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide reliable wireless connectivity to NBA media and expand mobile services to all FedExForum events • Increase network throughput and reliability, and facilitate network management • Quickly set up wireless services for different user groups
<p>NETWORK SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified wireless network provides throughput and reliability required to support a wide range of media activity • Wireless controllers simplify guest access management, making it easy for IT staff to extend wireless services to different events and user groups as needed • Wireless location appliance tracks facility assets, and wireless IP phones keep IT staff accessible at all times
<p>BUSINESS RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerated wireless service provisioning for any event, such as the NBA Draft, from days to minutes • Significantly increased wireless coverage and network performance, making network management practically effortless and improving the user experience • Helped FedExForum become a technology model for other arenas and teams

Business Challenge

The Memphis Grizzlies history has been about progressive change. Joining the NBA in 1995 as the Vancouver Grizzlies, the franchise later moved from Vancouver to Memphis, where it undertook the largest public building construction project in the city’s history. The US\$250 million development, which took two years to design and complete, resulted in the FedExForum, the leading sports and entertainment facility in the mid-South. Today, the 18,000-seat stadium is home to both the Memphis Grizzlies and the University of Memphis Tigers and hosts a wide range of other events, including HBO boxing, Disney on Ice, and music concerts. “With so many public figures coming into our facility, providing Internet service to the media has always been extremely important,” says Mike Garrison, vice president of IT for the Memphis Grizzlies.

When the Memphis Grizzlies moved into the completed FedExForum in 2005, it immediately deployed a wireless network to keep the media connected. At the time, the NBA had enacted a ruling requiring all arenas to provide reliable wireless connectivity for their main floor seating, where the media usually work. The Memphis Grizzlies IT staff used standalone wireless access points to provide connectivity to the photographers, writers, and

sportscasters who sit in the media suites, at the scores tables, and in the media overflow areas, but that wasn’t enough. “The network was constantly experiencing interference, and we spent a lot of time managing the access points to maintain the connection. It was clear that we needed an enterprise-class wireless network, not only to meet the NBA requirements, but to provide high-quality mobile services for all of the events hosted at the FedExForum,” says Garrison.

Solution

The Memphis Grizzlies was a long-term Cisco® customer even before moving into the FedExForum. “We researched other wireless network solutions, but we already trusted the quality of Cisco products and valued our relationship. Plus, Cisco Stadium Vision solutions support the wireless applications that we plan to implement in the future,” says Garrison. To provide continuous

wireless coverage throughout the entire facility, the organization decided to deploy a Cisco Unified Wireless Network, consisting of Cisco Catalyst® 6500 Series Wireless Service Modules with Cisco Aironet® 1130AG and 1240AG Series Access Points. Cisco Aironet 1252N Access Points will be added to the network by January 2009.

“Today, new arenas are using us as a technology model as they build their facilities, and other teams are calling to discuss our wireless services.”

—Mike Garrison, Vice President of IT

The Cisco Unified Wireless Network now provides the throughput and reliability required to support a wide range of media activity. Broadcast and cable network sportscasters now easily connect to their headquarter VPNs; photographers transmit large image files; and writers send reports back to their newspapers immediately. “The Cisco Unified Wireless Network keeps the media productive, providing live blog updates, event pictures, and coverage to their audiences. This ability to deliver information right from the pulse of an event enhances the media’s experience of our facility,” says Garrison.

By simplifying guest access management, the Cisco Unified Wireless Network made it possible to extend wireless services to all events hosted in the arena. “Within the Cisco Wireless Service Module, we simply define separate SSIDs [Service Set Identifiers] for each event. The controller automatically serves the right customized portal page and applies the appropriate user policies when each group logs in,” says Garrison. Continuous wireless access makes it easy for facility guests, such as performers and their managers and support staff, to work from the FedExForum.

The Memphis Grizzlies IT team also deployed the Cisco Wireless Location Appliance to track its assets. “In the future, we will apply RFID tags to all of our equipment, from TVs and carts to forklifts. Cisco’s location-based capabilities not only enable us to track where the equipment is at a particular time, but we now have visibility into much more data, including when it was moved. The addition of RFID tags will help us identify potential security holes if items disappear,” says Garrison.

Most recently, the Memphis Grizzlies organization began utilizing the voice over Wi-Fi capabilities of the Cisco Unified Wireless Network. The IT staff uses Cisco’s wireless IP phones to keep them connected throughout the enormous facility. “In the past, we used walkie talkies and two-way radios, but we couldn’t use them when we were outside of the facility. Plus, we couldn’t receive outside calls. Now, our customers can reach us even when we’re away from our desks performing support or troubleshooting services,” says Garrison.

Results

The Cisco Unified Wireless Network gives the Memphis Grizzlies-FedExForum organization the flexibility to provide high-quality mobile services to its customers more easily than ever before, while simplifying network management. During the 2008 NBA Draft, the Memphis Grizzlies IT team was able to set up a wireless LAN in the “war room,” so team executives could remain in constant communication during the process. Using the Cisco Wireless Control System, the IT team was able to push the new network configuration to the access points. “Before deploying the Cisco Unified Wireless Network, setting up wireless services for the NBA Draft would have required IT to assign dedicated resources and time. Instead, we were able to create a separate SSID for that event

within minutes, giving the Memphis Grizzlies executive team the advantage of real-time information access while maintaining the security of our network,” says Garrison.

The Cisco Unified Wireless Network now provides the network reliability and performance required to support mobile services in FedExForum’s large venue, while reducing IT management time. “The Cisco Unified Wireless Network’s controller-based architecture provides redundancy, helping ensure minimal downtime. And the network design enables smooth roaming, making it possible for guests and staff to move around the facility without losing connectivity,” says Garrison.

The Cisco Unified Wireless Network radio resource management and automatic load-balancing capabilities dynamically minimize interference and distribute traffic across the access points. In the past, the IT team of four had to manually add access points to increase coverage and support additional media and guests trying to access the network. This was a formidable task in the FedExForum, which spans close to three acres. “The Cisco Unified Wireless Network makes management practically effortless, and wireless coverage and network performance have significantly increased,” says Garrison.

The implementation of the Cisco Unified Wireless Network helped the Memphis Grizzlies-FedExForum organization to remain at the forefront of technology and provide the best experience for its customers. “The FedExForum was created to be a technology center. Today, new arenas are using us as a technology model as they build their facilities, and other teams are calling to discuss our wireless services. Cisco has played a key role in helping us reach that level of technology leadership, which translates into more attractive sponsorships for us and better services for our customers,” says Garrison.

PRODUCT LIST

Wireless

- Cisco Aironet 1130AG Series Access Points
- Cisco Aironet 1240AG Series Access Points
- Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series Wireless Service Modules
- Cisco 2710 Wireless Location Appliance

Voice over Wi-Fi

- Cisco Wireless IP Phones 7921

Voice and IP Communications

- Cisco Call Manager
- Cisco Enterprise IP Contact Center (IPCC)
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7960G
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7940G
- Cisco Unified IP Phones 7911G

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Catalyst 3550 Series Switches
- Cisco Catalyst 3560 Series Switches
- Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series Switches
- Cisco 2821 Integrated Services Router

Security and VPN

- Cisco ASA Series Adaptive Security Appliances

Next Steps

The Memphis Grizzlies IT team has many plans for expanding the use of the Cisco Unified Wireless Network. The FedExForum will be hosting an NCAA level tournament in 2009 and will be adding Cisco 802.11n access points to provide greater throughput, supporting the increased number of media expected at the event. The IT team also plans to increase the use of Cisco’s location-based capabilities, adding RFID tracking for guests and personnel to tighten facility security further. In addition, the organization intends to grow the number of Cisco wireless IP phones, making them available to performers’ support staff, internal guest service personnel, and the facility’s security team.

The biggest plans for the Memphis Grizzlies-FedExForum organization will be implemented with Cisco’s Stadium Vision solutions. Built around the Cisco Unified Wireless Network, Stadium Vision will

enable a wide range of services to improve the attendee experience, including electronic billing, broadcasting replays over mobile devices, and customized directed advertising. “Cisco is a true business partner. They’ve already helped us improve the experience of our facility guests tremendously. Our future work together will be about growing our mobile services to cultivate fan loyalty, increase attendance, and generate more revenue,” says Garrison.

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco Unified Wireless Network and 802.11n technology, visit <http://www.cisco.com/go/wireless>.

To find out more about the Memphis Grizzlies and FedExForum, visit <http://www.nba.com/grizzlies/> and <http://www.fedexforum.com/homepage.aspx>.



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