Norwegian Professional Football League (NPFL) Gains Insight into Fan Behavior with Cisco DNA Spaces

Ubiquitous wireless and powerful analytics enable a seamless digital experience for fans across the league

Summary

With Cisco solutions, clubs from the NPFL grew their Wi-Fi usage by 13 percent and saw a 22-percent opt-in rate for personalized engagements. The organization is leading an ongoing effort to replicate this successful model across other clubs in the league.

Solution

Location Services

- Cisco® DNA Spaces

Wireless

- Cisco Aironet® 3800 Series Access Points
- Cisco 5520 Wireless Controllers

Switching and Routing

- Cisco Catalyst® 3850 and 2960 Series Switches
- Cisco Next Generation Firewall ASA 5525-X with Firepower® Services

Norwegian Professional Football League

Industry:

Sports and Entertainment

Location:

Norway

Employees:

18

“When the Valerenga Football club moved from its old venue to a new stadium with Cisco wireless, the club experienced a thirteen percent increase in acquisition of Wi-Fi users.”

Thomas Torjusen
Head of Media and Chief Digital Officer, Norwegian Professional Football League

Signage

- Cisco Vision Dynamic Signage solution version 6.1

Services

- Cisco Advanced Services

Keeping fans engaged everywhere

The people of Norway are among the world’s leaders in utilizing smartphones and the internet. For these tech-aware citizens, high-performance connectivity is a must-have in every environment. The Norwegian Professional Football League (NPFL) understands these high expectations and maintains a relentless focus on technology to deliver the best possible experience for its fans. In 2014, the organization became the first league in the world to implement Wi-Fi and mobile video across the entire league.

To deliver ubiquitous wireless connectivity and video offerings throughout its venues, the NPFL deployed Cisco Connected Stadium™ Wi-Fi and StadiumVision™ Mobile solutions. Establishing this connectivity ensures that visitors will be connected and engaged through their mobile devices. However, it was just the first step in a broader strategy to learn more about fans and serve them more effectively.

“Our initiative was part of a strategic plan that we started in 2012,” says Thomas Torjusen, Head of Media and Chief Digital Officer at Norwegian Professional Football League. “We wanted to know more about people who attended games at our venues. Our studies showed that only one in four fans was known to us via the ticketing systems, so we needed to find a way to acquire more customer data. We were also seeking to apply what we learned to provide them with the right service and content offerings.”

“In Norway, the league clubs are already connected to a fiber network, so the connectivity was already in place between venues,” says Svenn Ove Solend, Strategic Account Manager at Telenor Inpli Norge, a leading provider of network solutions in Norway and Sweden. “The League wanted to capitalize on the infrastructure that was just already available for TV contribution from the arena and use it to deliver more services.”

To enable the intelligence and analytics it required, the NPFL turned to Cisco.

"The National Arena has approximately 28,000 seats at the venue, and we have installed 310 Cisco 3800 Series Access Points, as well as Cisco 5520 Wireless Controllers serving concourses, suites, and individual seats," says Torjusen. "The Cisco wired network at the site provides power and data for the access points, and each venue is tied together on a low-latency fiber network to provide rich media services such as video, without latency. This is special, because not many leagues throughout the world can provide this level of service—without having to think about where the club is."

Delivering customized, compliant wireless connectivity to thousands

Cisco Connected Stadium Wi-Fi is a fundamental element of the NPFL's solution. Designed for high-density environments, this Wi-Fi offering for sports and entertainment brings together Cisco's leading wireless innovations, specialized software, and professional services in a turnkey solution optimized for stadiums and arenas. It extends real-time, reliable access to applications and services on mobile devices to tens of thousands of fans. During the development period, the penetration of 5-GHz supported devices made it easier to establish rich services for the fans in the venues because there are more available radio frequencies compared to the 2.4-GHz band. This is important in a demanding radio environment such as a venue.

Cisco Aironet 3800 Series Access Points and Cisco wireless controllers provide high-bandwidth connectivity back to the Cisco network infrastructure at stadiums, which in turn connect to the NPFL's fiber network. To begin understanding more about fan behavior during games and send proximity based engagements, the NPFL deployed Cisco DNA Spaces. This flexible software solution lets organizations quickly create and customize location-specific and user-specific engagements that can be delivered via SMS, smart captive portal, email, application, or API triggers. Today, they find value in the smart captive portal tool to influence the fan experience.

"Cisco DNA Spaces is the first step where we meet our customers," says Torjusen. "Fans come to the connected venues and see a wireless network called @Football. We provide them with the portal page of the venue, which we can customize in the way the venue owner wants. It's a very professional way to onboard the customer to the digital journey."

Cisco DNA Spaces provides granular control over what types of visitor information will be collected during the onboarding process, for ease of use and regulatory compliance.

"We had several discussions on what types of data we should collect, enabling the League to make onboarding as easy as possible," says Solend. "We were also careful to comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) standards and are very strict in asking customers to authorize us to use the data. Global compliance support is a very strong point of this platform, and Cisco software helps us ensure that visitors maintain full control of their data."

The Cisco Connected Stadium Wi-Fi solution and Cisco DNA Spaces enable visitors to take advantage of Internet connectivity, as well as live streaming content offered by a third party, with access to all the performance and services that they could enjoy at home or at work.

Cisco Advanced Services helped educate the NPFL's IT organization on optimal placement of wireless access points, empowering its staff to deploy and modify wireless connectivity at any venue that requires it.

“We are working to get more clubs to sign on in Norway, to provide them with customer data and wireless services,” says Torjusen. “When they see the possibilities, they respond very favorably. But it is all about understanding and being able to act on the possibilities.”

To learn more about how Cisco wireless solutions can benefit your organization, visit the Cisco Wireless and Mobility solutions webpage.

C36-741613-00 03/19

A model that can be replicated across venues

Together, the Cisco solutions have enabled the NPFL to engage fans and learn more about them in a way that was simply not possible before.

When the Vålerenga Football club moved from its old venue to a new stadium with Cisco wireless, the club experienced a 13 percent increase in acquisition of Wi-Fi users. They are also seeing a 22 percent opt in rate for location engagements.

“In general people have been very satisfied with the Wi-Fi capacity they experience,” says Torjusen. “They can view any content and services they wish, without restrictions, and when they are connected they will get instant replays of all events through the Eliteserien or OBOS-ligaen app as well as in the Viking and Vålerenga app. The fan will also be able to see live streams from the actual match and from other matches played at the same time.”

The League has also accumulated tens of thousands of CRM entries, and is acquiring the source data needed for better insights into fan behavior and profiling. Conversations are now underway about how to best apply the data, while remaining sensitive to fan privacy and regulatory compliance.

The Cisco solution also offers a scalable, replicable model that NPFL teams can apply to establish high-performance, ubiquitous wireless services at any venue—quickly and consistently, for a variety of events.

“Before we deployed the Cisco solution, it was up to each club to set up its own wireless access and portal,” says Torjusen. “Now it is easy to set up different events for different types of venues. In addition to football, we can and have established portals for hockey matches in the National Arena, motorcycle races, and other attractions. It gives our venues much more value because the experience can be customized to the specific event.”

“It’s very easy to set up a customized portal page and schedule the engagement,” adds Solend. “IT resources are often limited, making it difficult to update the content on the day of a match. With the new Cisco solution, we can prepare the content in advance and simply schedule the switchover.”

With its scalable solution in place, the NPFL is engaging professional sports clubs throughout the region to encourage them to gain better insight into their own fans and audiences.