When Camden Market decided to become the world's first indoor/outdoor market to deploy WiFi, it connected with cloud solution provider Purple WiFi and Cisco Meraki for the ultimate in hotspot software, hardware, security and networking.

Business Challenge

The new owners of London's fourth busiest tourist attraction, the historic Camden Market, recognized the value of WiFi even before they acquired the complex of retail shops, restaurants, pubs and cinemas. Camden visitors – who come from all over the world – had been asking about WiFi. The tech-savvy owners understood that turning Camden into a WiFi hotspot would benefit shoppers by enabling them to log in via Facebook, navigate the market and take advantage of promotions delivered in real time, while providing valuable consumer insights to Camden about its visitors and their preferences.

“We wanted to bring the market into the 21st century – online and unified,” says Camden’s Head of IT, Jac Timms. “We wanted WiFi everywhere.” In short, Camden sought to provide the service and in turn get actionable information back from visitors – information they could use to push relevant promotions directly from the cloud to shoppers’ smart phones, tablets and laptops.

Camden wanted to implement Meraki for switching, security and hardware devices that are centrally managed from the cloud. But first it wanted to know how Purple WiFi, the cloud-based WiFi provider and Cisco Preferred Solution Partner, worked with Merkai and what it offered Camden on top of that – such as social metrics, rich user data and content filtering. “Purple WiFi helped seal the deal to deploy Meraki and confirm this was our best path because of how well the two cloud based solutions work,” says Timms. Meraki gives visibility and control to network administrators without the cost and complexity of controller appliances or overlay management software. It’s a seamless, elegant cloud-networking solution. As part of its portfolio development,
Purple WiFi had worked closely with Cisco’s Internet of Everything (IoE) Innovation Centre in London to integrate and test its solution so it could carry the Cisco Compatible brand. Camden could confidently deploy Meraki knowing that Purple WiFi had fully verified the platform with Cisco’s technology.

Solution

The powerful combination of Purple WiFi Guest WiFi and Cisco Meraki enables Camden to look at the entire outdoor space as a whole. “The Purple Portal” displays rich analytics that are useful to marketing and business teams: It shows what countries Camden’s visitors come from as well as the visitors’ Facebook “likes.” These “social insights” help Camden categorize its visitors and create promotions and discounts in real time. Camden can tell when someone visits for the first time and when they return; the solution even tracks visitors as they move around the market, from zone to zone.

There are other vendors in the WiFi space, notes Timms. They look at choke points, entrances, exits, pathways and floor plans. But they don’t include the social media component. While a few other companies offer a social media login, “they don’t come close to the Purple WiFi and Meraki solution in terms of the analytics they offer,” he says.

Because the market – built originally as horse stables in 1854 – is unusually configured, and because Camden is forbidden to put devices on listed buildings, the deployment required more access points than had been originally planned. But the installation was smooth from start to finish.

Business Results

“We had a successful Meraki installation at a competitive price,” says Timms. While it’s still too early to calculate an ROI, one immediate benefit was the ability to be quickly up and running. Although it took some time to calibrate the space and make sure the devices were all plotting to the map accurately, the agile cloud-based solution requires no hardware setup. Launching Purple WiFi’s powerful reports and analytics functions required just a few settings to be configured and added to the Meraki dashboard.

“We can see how many people log in,” says Timms. “We can drive people to the market, to different areas; we can track them. We can see them in real time through their WiFi after they log in to the Purple Portal. This is what we envisioned, and this is what we built.”

More Information

To find out more about the Cisco Partner Solution, go to: www.purplewifi.com.

“Meraki is a fantastic solution that goes hand-in-hand with Purple WiFi’s software and expertise in cloud-based systems.”

— Jac Timms, Head of IT, Camden Market