Football Stadium Boosts its Team and City

Donbass Arena’s Cisco Connected Stadium platform makes it Europe’s destination for football and an attraction for residents.

CHALLENGE
- Build best stadium in Europe
- Deliver innovative fan experience
- Provide state-of-the-art services with small IT team

SOLUTION
- Cisco Connected Stadium
- Cisco Advisory Services and Plan, Design, and Implementation

RESULTS
- Sold out seating and VIP suites for foreseeable future
- Attracted EURO 2012 matches
- Transformed civic pride and revitalized city

Challenge
Donetsk, Ukraine is home to coal mining and heavy manufacturing industries, as well as one of the world’s leading football teams and most technologically advanced football stadiums. Planning began in 2006 for the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Category 4 stadium, which was completed in 2009, with a total capacity of 51,504 seats. Donbass Arena includes 45 VIP boxes, 53 fast-food outlets, a fan cafe, four bars, three restaurants, a media café, and a lounge bar.

The arena was completely new and would be built without using any existing structures. As the owner and city officials began planning, they toured other stadiums to help identify the types of facilities and services that the new Donbass Arena would include. The club chose to work with Cisco because of the Cisco® Connected Stadium platform and vision. The Connected Stadium solution is part of the Cisco portfolio of Sports and Entertainment solutions. A connected stadium, such as Donbass Arena, uses intelligent network capabilities to bring together people, services, and information, helping transform the surrounding community.

The club engaged Cisco Advisory Services to define the services that the stadium would deliver to fans, the media, and teams. Together, Cisco and the club identified approximately 150 potential services and chose 40 that would be essential to delivering a superior fan experience. The club also chose Cisco Plan, Design, and Implementation services to design and implement the security, network, wireless, and communications services and infrastructure that would be required. The result is one of the most highly sought-after venues for football, and a tremendous boost to Donetsk civic pride and city revenue.

“The Cisco Connected Stadium solution provides us with a comprehensive architecture for creating a superior fan experience and maximizing the utilization of Donbass Arena. Our ability to easily meet the needs of our football club, Shakhtar Donetsk, as well as a wide range of other users, gives us a great advantage in attracting events and their associated benefits to the city.”

– Dmitry Teplyakov, chief information officer for Donbass Arena
Solution

The Cisco Connected Stadium solution is a converged, scalable, secure network designed to bring together access, communications, entertainment, and operations capabilities onto a single platform. It provides an infrastructure that is optimized for a wide range of integrated services that increase safety and security, deliver an outstanding fan experience, increase revenue opportunities, simplify management, and reduce operational costs. A Cisco Connected Stadium solution also helps ensure long-term investment protection, enabling the stadium to add new solutions and services to adapt to change.

Donbass Arena has one network over which it operates all building systems, media, lighting, ticketing, security, and communications. The network also integrates and distributes high-definition video with digital content and interactive fan services to connect the team and the stadium with fans in entirely new ways. With almost 600 screens installed throughout the stadium, fans can watch the match from almost anywhere in the arena, and the arena’s IT staff can control content on individual screens from a central console. The converged network also supports extensive integrated video surveillance and access control, including approximately 450 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras.

Each of the 45 VIP suites provides a boardroom environment, complete with corporate email and intranet access; HDTV access to views from multiple cameras; video clips and digital photos of games sent to home or mobile devices; online conferencing capabilities; fine cuisine; and the ability to use the balcony for promoting the guest’s business.

Approximately 6000 network ports are installed in the stadium for concurrent network connection. The arena provides high-speed wired and wireless networks for staff and personnel, in addition to guest access for fans, vendors, contractors, media, and VIP suite visitors. The network also supports secure, efficient ticketing and point-of-sale infrastructure. Donbass Arena uses a smartcard-based payment system to prevent fans from bringing cash into the stadium. Fans purchase and load a card with a predetermined amount and use the card for all purchases within the stadium.

Cisco Unified Communications solutions enable fans to purchase tickets, make restaurant reservations, receive parking passes, view digital photos of the game, and blog online. Combined with Cisco Unified Wireless solutions, fans can watch video replays, receive real-time statistics, send and receive electronic messages, receive merchandising information, and play virtual reality games on their smartphones anywhere in the stadium. Advertisers can use the arena’s internal web portal to deliver promotions to fans’ phones. Donbass Arena is also used as a conference and special event center throughout the year. In addition to the VIP suites, the arena offers IP-enabled meeting rooms, online information access, video conferencing, and virtual concierge services for business guests.

Building automation systems are driven from central data servers to maximize efficiencies and minimize operating costs. Using Cisco EnergyWise technology, the operations team can monitor, report, and reduce energy consumption of Power over Ethernet devices such as Cisco Unified IP phones, wireless access points, and digital media players. Heating, ventilation, air conditioning, lighting, parking, and elevators, are all controlled centrally over the network.

“The Cisco Connected Stadium solution provides us with a comprehensive architecture for creating a superior fan experience and maximizing the utilization of the Donbass Arena,” says Dmitry Teplyakov, chief information officer for Donbass Arena. “Our ability to easily meet the needs of our football club, Shakhtar Donetsk, as well as a wide range of other users, gives us a great advantage in attracting events and their associated benefits to the city.”
Results

The Donbass Arena opened August 29, 2009 to sold-out games. Shakhtar Donetsk has the highest average attendance in Ukraine and usually sells 100 percent of its seats. The team has already sold all of its VIP boxes for years in advance. And even though the arena expected to generate the majority of its revenue from football match ticket sales, it is also generating significant revenue from other events held here.

The beautiful, comfortable areas in the concourses and the large park that surrounds the stadium have encouraged more fans to arrive earlier, stay later, and spend more while at the arena. The smartcard payment system increases the amount that people spend and accelerates transaction times for more fan convenience. Additionally, there is no cash loss for the stadium, and unspent funds on visitors’ cards represents money that can be used at the stadium in the future, encouraging repeat visits. Increased revenues for the team result in higher budgets for investments in infrastructure and players, and attract more investors and sponsors, as well as larger TV broadcast contracts.

In traditional stadiums, changing signage between events is time- and resource-intensive for stadium staff. With the Cisco Connected Stadium solution, individual screens can be controlled with the push of a button. This capability enables sponsors and advertisers to reach attendees with the right message and frequency and gives the arena the ability to offer a wider range of advertising and activation opportunities. The ability to instantly update pricing and promotional images on digital concession menu boards during the game offers additional opportunities to deliver spontaneous targeted promotions. Changing signage and advertising for different games in different competitions takes just seconds. The HDTV screens offer more advertising space and the ability to also show match footage.

Managing the environment is easy for the arena’s small, highly productive IT team. Because all building management systems use the IP network as their communication platform, the team can proactively monitor energy usage. On non-match days, outside stadium operating hours, or during matches or other events that do not utilize the full capacity of the stadium, building systems and devices can be shut down remotely, either manually or automatically. This feature results in substantial energy savings and carbon footprint reduction.

The IT team also can manage all fan-facing communication and security from a single interface. The network enables physical access control and video surveillance systems to be integrated with security personnel communications, improving situational awareness and shortening incident response times. As people cross security zones within the stadium, wireless cameras automatically hand off surveillance images. The system uses advanced analytics to identify unusual behavior. Because people are aware of the security system, it has helped deter undesirable behavior and made the stadium extremely popular with families.

“Our IT team has every system at their fingertips in one central place,” says Alexander Atamanenko, general manager of Donbass Arena. “In addition to enabling us to efficiently manage the regularly scheduled matches and other events, the Cisco Connected Stadium will enable us to easily scale our efforts to host Euro 2012 and host a world-class event.”

The new Donbass Arena has had a significant impact on team and civic pride. The Shakhtar Donetsk football club has won 31 out of its 34 games played in the stadium, making it one of the top eight teams in Europe. The arena has been chosen for hosting UEFA EURO 2012 matches.

Perhaps the most lasting impact of the new arena is on the city of Donetsk itself. Donetsk is not traditionally a tourist destination, yet when the stadium was built, people came specifically to tour the stadium. More than 5000 tours have been conducted since the stadium’s opening. The stadium and its large surrounding public park also have made Donbass Arena a unique community center. City residents and visitors come to the stadium and its
surrounding park to walk, picnic, attend special events, and even get married. The stadium's parking lot becomes available for public parking on non-match days. Because the stadium is built within the city, it has boosted the city’s self-image and revitalized service businesses, such as hotels and restaurants.

Next Steps
Shakhtar Donetsk and the city of Donetsk have shown great vision in investing in the new stadium. Not only is it boosting the football team, it has also raised the city’s profile and become a source of pride. Donbass Arena is leading the way for other cities in Europe that aim to benefit in similar ways.

For More Information
To find out more about Cisco Sports and Entertainment solutions, visit: http://www.cisco.com/go/sports
To learn more about Donbass Arena, visit http://donbass-arena.com/en/

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