



THE CHANNEL ISLANDS CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

CASE STUDY



DATA INTEGRATION
An Xchanging Company

The Channel Islands Cooperative Society, who operate food and non-food stores in Jersey and Guernsey, have seen the future of retail, and it is location-enabled wireless via Data Integration, an Aruba Networks partner.

The challenge

Whilst the initial focus is on the essential job of wireless-enabling existing processes, an important reason for choosing Aruba was the opportunities it opened up to do more – much more – in the future, says Peter Bruges, Chief Financial Officer for The Channel Islands Co-operative Society and the man behind the wireless project.

“I’m fascinated by what we can do with Wi-Fi in the future. It can do a lot now, but once you have it in it’s what it then enables you to go on and do,” he says. “What’s exciting is it what it opens up in the way of customer engagement. For example, a shopping app with a location overlay – we have accuracy to 10 feet [3m] today but this can be enhanced. Then you can layer on targeted promotional activity.

“We got into Wi-Fi to enable wireless internal processes,” he adds. “For example, stock-checks and order placement can all be done live, instead of having to dock a handheld scanner. That is useful, though it is just replicating an existing process.”

Those internal processes cover a fairly broad spread. The Co-op has 23 food outlets around Jersey and Guernsey, some attached to petrol stations. Four are large supermarkets, 13 are

convenience stores, and 6 petrol stations. The stores range from 140 to 2200 square metres. The Channel Islands Cooperative Society is locally owned by its 100,000 Channel Island resident members and operates exclusively in Jersey and Guernsey.

The approach

The project started with site surveys for the Co-op’s new head office on Jersey plus two of its stores, says Mike Ashby, the Data Integration pre-sales engineer who worked with the Co-op to plan and install the wireless network. The aim, he says, was both to equip the Co-op with a state-of-the-art network to match its modern offices, and to prove the ability to roll out the Aruba technology in a modular way that is ideally suited to a geographically-dispersed business – for example, getting a simple network up and running first, then adding say tracking or device management as needed.

“Once we had that infrastructure in place and we had proven its modularity and capability, they became more comfortable with it, and we could start the process of skills transfer to get them familiar with the technology and deploying it to new sites,” Ashby adds. “We are not an official Aruba training house, but most of our projects now involve skills transfer – it’s a key part of delivering a complete system.”

“I’m fascinated by what we can do with Wi-Fi in the future. It can do a lot now, but once you have it in it’s what it then enables you to go on and do,”

Peter Bruges
Chief Financial Officer
The Channel Islands Co-
Operative Society

The solution

The Co-op now has a total of around 85 Aruba Instant access points covering its head office and stores. These do not require separate controllers, which made it a much more cost-effective solution, Ashby says, noting that the Co-op also bought Aruba's Airwave management tool and its ClearPass guest access suite.

Peter Bruges adds that while many companies could have helped the Co-op simply streamline its existing processes with wireless networking, there had to be more to it than that in order to justify an investment of this scale. In particular, while BYOD and customer connectivity might feature in the long term, in the short to medium term other aspects are more important.

Technology deployed

Aruba Instant access points
Clearpass guest access controller
Power-over-Ethernet (PoE) switches
AirWave management and monitoring server

The benefits

"Today, people have wireless in, but they're using it in a pretty simplistic way," he says. "It's thinking it through, I can see the technology is coming but what use can I find for it in our business? Data Integration helps here, keeping us up to date and providing expertise.

Location based technology

"Our business is a target for salespeople, but a lot of what those [wireless networking] guys are selling is to manage employee BYOD, which was a bit of an irrelevance for us. Our interest was in improving our customers' experience through use of location technology and apps," he continues. He notes for example that he has tapped Data Integration for advice on Meridian, which is Aruba's new way-finding technology for indoor navigation.

Customer experience

Where Bruges and his colleagues are looking, therefore, is a wider mobility and customer engagement strategy. "In the last two years there's been a lot of consideration on how we refocus the business away from internal and supplier relationships and onto the customer and how we engage," he says.

Issues resolved

Streamlined business processes
Improved stock tracking and ordering
Greater customer engagement
Improved business intelligence

The future

"A long-term development will be wireless networking for store colleagues to interact with customers – the customer community will be a big thing in the future."

He adds that all of this relies on knowing your customers, an area where being a member-owned society does give some advantages. "We are unique in the Co-op movement here in that our 80-90% of our customers are members, versus 30-40% in UK Co-ops," says Bruges. [The Channel Islands Cooperative Society is not part of the UK Cooperative Group.]

So what is his advice for anyone else looking at the possibilities of wireless, and what are the big challenges along the way?

"Timing is a big challenge," he says. "You need to identify timescales and requirements, deciding when you're going to use the various aspects of it, and being realistic about that. A good partner, such as Data Integration, can help here."

Wireless also cannot be considered in isolation, he notes. "For example, the biggest problem in our industry is legacy systems – our till system is too old to do promotions, and we needed new PoE switches as well as new cabling. So you have to have a plan to converge all your plans and developments. And then of course it's cost – some of the numbers involved are mindboggling."

But as the Co-op installs Aruba access points in its stores and rolls out wireless handheld terminals, Bruges and his colleagues, with help from Data Integration, are seeing more and more future uses for it.

"Another project I'm looking at is mobile payments – we could link that in too. It will be a while though, 18 months or more," he says. "We can do heatmapping with the Aruba solution too. Even if they're not connected we can still see Wi-Fi enabled devices. It doesn't give much detail, so there are no privacy issues, but we can get some idea of footfall."

He concludes: "Whilst this helps with an existing problem, the key focus is on an alternative future. It says here's how the world is moving, how can you move your business to keep up?"

The Walbrook Building
London • EC4N 8AQ • UK

Telephone +44 (0)20 8875 6500
Facsimile +44 (0)20 8711 3893
Email info@dataintegration.com
Website www.dataintegration.com

© 2014 Xchanging
Data Integration is a Xchanging Company

About Data Integration

Data Integration specialises in managed networks, managed security services, mobility solutions and high performance IT platforms.

We provide these services to over 300 leading organisations in Higher Education, Insurance, Finance and the Public Sector, benefiting from reduced cost, simplified solutions and optimised performance.