

Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center Uses Xirrus Wi-Fi to Deliver a Fulfilling Guest Experience



The Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center is a “total destination resort” reminiscent of a grand Florida mansion that draws from classic Florida architecture reflecting and bringing to life the state’s history, culture and natural beauty. Situated on 63 acres, the Gaylord Palms uses wireless technology to provide world-class meeting facilities and ensure exceptional service across the expansive property.

The Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center is recognized as a symbol of Florida, featuring a signature 4.5-acre glass-enclosed atrium where guests discover a variety of themed environments that depict such popular Florida destinations as Key West, St. Augustine and the Everglades. Additionally, with 1,406 guest rooms, including 106 suites and nine presidential suites, the resort is able to host hundreds of thousands of annual convention center guests and exhibitors each year.

The renowned Florida resort saw an opportunity to provide enhanced wireless services in its 400,000-square-foot convention center to support media-rich exhibits that serve the thousands of mobile devices that attendees would be using concurrently during their meetings. Gaylord Palms’ executives cite customer satisfaction and wireless scalability as the main drivers in their decision to deploy Xirrus Wireless Arrays.

Wireless Connectivity is a Must-Have for Resorts

Gaylord Palms’ convention planners recognized that the widespread adoption of mobile devices by convention center attendees was accelerating. As a world-class resort recognized for hosting several of the top technology conventions in the country, facility administrators soon realized that they needed to upgrade their wireless network.

“From Microsoft Exchange Connect to Enterprise Connect and the Gartner IT Infrastructure & Operations Management Summit, our attendees are technology experts toting smartphones, tablets, and laptops and demand constant wireless connectivity. With 5000+ concurrently connected devices, our previous wireless infrastructure wasn’t giving us the capacity or throughput we needed,” commented Elena Ciobotaru, network specialist for Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center. “Xirrus, quite frankly, allowed us to have confidence in our wireless, and actually keep pace with the technological advances we were promoting at our events. We decided to provide the ultimate wireless experience because it was consistent with our image and adds immeasurable value for our guests.”

Requirements

- Wireless coverage in the 400,000 square-foot convention center and adjoining exhibition facilities, to support attendees’ media-rich convention experience
- Specialized, flexible, high-capacity wireless network to ensure a high-quality user experience for more than one thousand concurrent users and devices
- Application intelligence that enable prioritization of key applications and the ability to connect more devices to the network by optimizing Wi-Fi spectrum usage
- Wireless solution that could be deployed quickly in unique locations, including outside areas

Solution

- 47 four-radio and 38 eight-radio high-capacity Xirrus Wireless Arrays
- Xirrus Management System (XMS) providing monitoring and management, and intelligent auto-switching of network bands and capacity
- 12 Xirrus Rapid Deployment Kits (RDK) that can be deployed in less than ten minutes

Benefits

- Delivers wired-like coverage and capacity to attendees in the convention center and adjoining exhibition facilities
- Three-fold decrease in the number of wireless access points that reduces installation, labor, maintenance, and power consumption costs
- Enables convention center attendees, vendors, and exhibitors to stream video, engage social media, download applications, and communicate with others on mobile devices without latency issues
- Comprehensive coverage for guests, providing access to fast, secure Wi-Fi in their rooms, public areas, and throughout the exhibition space

Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center replaced its previous wireless infrastructure, and installed 47 four-radio and 38 eight-radio Wireless Arrays – the equivalent of 246 traditional 2-radio Access Points. Distributing wireless signals in a fashion similar to cell-phone towers, the implementation of Xirrus Wireless Arrays reduced the number of APs required three-fold – resulting in significant savings from both an installation and maintenance perspective.

IT administrators at the Gaylord Palms also implemented Xirrus Management System (XMS) which provides single-pane-of-glass monitoring and management of the Xirrus wireless network. Administrators are provided with comprehensive reports and real-time monitoring to ensure consistent connectivity and performance. Based on network usage, they can switch radios between 2.4GHz and 5GHz bands and add/remove radios.

Ciobotaru added: “During conventions, guests move around and shift the network load. So, we need more than wireless infrastructure – we need a wireless solution that can shift capacity to where guests are congregating in a moment’s notice. The XMS system provides us with graphical maps showing wireless coverage, devices and location so that we can respond to network demands. The wireless network responds intelligently, and the guests have a seamless wireless experience.”

“At the Gaylord Palms resort, we have provided network administrators with granular insights into specific device and application usage so they can reconfigure the network on the fly to ensure the optimal end-user experience and a network that will scale for years to come,” said Steven Wastie, chief marketing officer for Xirrus. “As newer devices become compatible with the 5GHz band, the Gaylord Palms will be prepared to reconfigure its wireless network and open up more channels, increasing bandwidth and customer satisfaction.”

The Xirrus solution for Gaylord Palms also included 12 Rapid Deployment Kits (RDks). These kits are designed to quickly and simply provide robust wireless connectivity to many users over a large area very quickly and without the complexity of deploying multiple APs, antennas, controllers, etc. Deployed in a matter of minutes, the RDK delivers out-of-the-box capability for the Gaylord Palms to quickly deploy a fully functional wireless network when more coverage is needed, for example, with special outdoor functions required for some events.

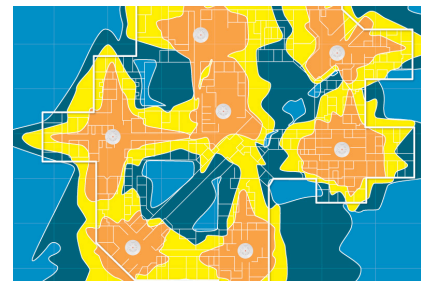
Ciobotaru stated: “In addition to the Wireless Arrays, we purchased the Xirrus Rapid Deployment Kits because not all of our conventions are the same; we have a beautiful property, and sometimes festivities or exhibits are held outside. With the kits, we can establish a strong wireless signal anywhere. The fact that Gaylord Palms guests now have access to fast, secure Wi-Fi in their rooms, public areas, and throughout the exhibition space means a lot to event planners, most of whom now see Wi-Fi as a prerequisite. Additionally, this comprehensive network coverage and bandwidth, which allows us to provide wired-like connectivity, is part of our mission to exceed customer expectations.”

Monetizing Wi-Fi in Large Public Venues

High-performance wireless connectivity presents new business opportunities for large public venues. Allowing resort guests and event attendees always-on wireless connectivity is just scratching the surface of what’s possible with Xirrus Arrays in such environments. The larger opportunity lies in providing resorts and convention centers the ability to monetize the network through new Wi-Fi based applications from geo-location to retail and beyond.

“For example, our network allows administrators to create wireless offerings based on their guests’ wireless device usage and location,” added Wastie. “We tell administrators to imagine their guests visiting a vendor or exhibitor and being able to download marketing documents wirelessly when they approach the booth. Or we ask administrators to envision their guests visiting the resort shopping center and being able to receive store discounts in real-time. With Xirrus Wireless Arrays, guests are not only receiving a wired-like connection, but also are gaining access to wireless applications that are built around their interaction with the property – and the kicker is, the monetization aspect as our customers can generate revenue based on all of these new apps powered by Xirrus Arrays.”

Xirrus Wireless Arrays place cutting-edge technology at the fingertips of vendors, guests, exhibitors, and administrators. Vendors and exhibitors value the ability to bolster their brand and conference presence with wireless applications. Guests are provided with an engaging wireless, but “wired-like,” Internet connection throughout the property. IT administrators appreciate the reduced infrastructure demands and the ability to reconfigure the network based on an event’s anticipated needs – in terms of user density and application load. Finally, business administrators choose Xirrus Wireless Arrays for their affordability and scalability, and because they realize that a good guest experience requires great wireless connectivity.



“Xirrus Wireless Arrays are best described as smart: they provide comprehensive, intelligent coverage with the fewest number of access points, delivering the ultimate wireless experience for our guests.”

ELENA CIOBOTARU
Network Specialist at Gaylord Palms
Resort & Convention Center

The Xirrus Advantage

With the explosion of smartphones and tablets, people expect to connect wirelessly whenever and wherever. Organizations require high-bandwidth connections to send and receive voice, video and data, from any device to any other device. And no one delivers better than Xirrus. The Xirrus suite of Wi-Fi optimized solutions—Arrays, access points and cloud services—draw from cellular tower design principles to provide wired-like reliability, increased user density and capacity, and superior security. They perform under the most demanding conditions and have lower infrastructure requirements than traditional controller-based Wi-Fi systems. When integrated with business and IT objectives, they help users do more than ever before.

At Xirrus, we apply the “best practices” of wired networking to wireless infrastructures by distributing the intelligence to the edge and outfitting our solutions with dense software programmable radios, device optimizations and application layer logic. That’s how Xirrus delivers the best-performing, most scalable wireless solutions in the industry. It’s a strategic IT infrastructure advantage that fuels organizations. Because Xirrus does wireless networks right.



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