

WiFi that Consistently Satisfies Demanding Hotel Guests



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- JOSE BARRIOS,
MANAGER, HOTEL
AQUARIOS

Overview

GUESTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD COME TO VISIT BAJA, MEXICO EVERY YEAR. WHILE off-road racing and beautiful beaches entice many visitors, the main attraction is the gray whales’ annual migration to have their babies in Baja’s warm waters – home to the only three places in the world where the gray whales will give birth.

Ecotourism drives guest occupancy year round, and Hotel Aquarios is perfectly located at the heart of the historical downtown center in La Paz. Hotel Aquarios opened its doors to the public in 1984, with all the services and amenities required for a 4 star hotel at the time.

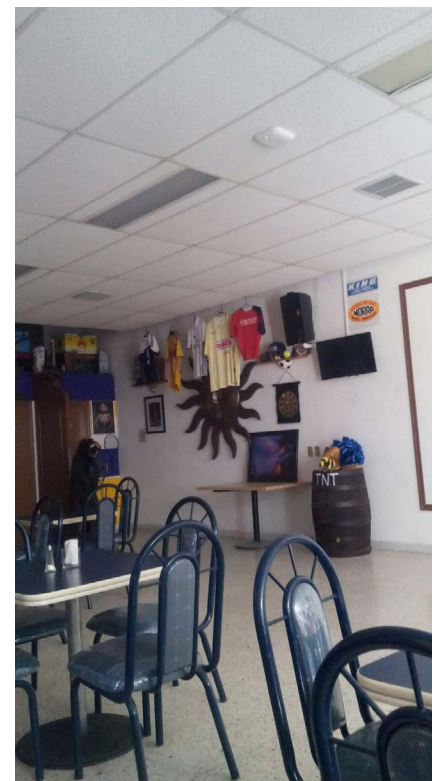
“Multiple conferences and events are held in the area,” says Jose Barrios, Manager, Hotel Aquarios. “With an international clientele, our customers expect enterprise level WiFi access. Most of the international guests use their WiFi devices to call home via VoIP or share their memories via social media.”

Challenge

“WE AIM TO SATISFY OUR GUESTS IN EVERY aspect,” said Barrios. “We provide reliable and customizable WiFi service to all guests during their stay in the hotel. This includes all common areas across the property, guest rooms, ball rooms, conference rooms, the pool area, restaurant, and sports bar.”

In 2004, as technology developed in the hospitality market, the hotel rapidly adopted initial WiFi deployments. “Most of our guests are business travelers,” said Barrios. “When we first opened, every guest had a work laptop to connect to the WiFi system. At that time, the standard was a single connected device per user. Now, every guest has on average of 4 to 6 devices while traveling for business or pleasure. Our WiFi system capacity was no longer enough.”

To accommodate events and groups, the hotel offers multiple splash pages per coverage area and guest level access. With local monthly conferences, it’s necessary to



customize multiple splash pages for specific events, but all customization must be done without requiring a WiFi shared key.

“One of the main issues to overcome was the solid hotel construction,” said Barrios. “The hotel was built to withstand harsh coastal weather. During the WiFi upgrades, every floor of the hotel was cabled with CAT5e Ethernet, routing back to the telecom closet at floor level. This is still in place today with multiple PoE switches to provide power and data to every access point on the property.”

The hotel currently uses the communications infrastructure for the following applications:

- Video surveillance IP camera system
- Hotel management systems
- VoIP services
- Connected conference rooms with voice and video services
- Employee SSID network

The challenge was finding a solution that could replace the existing equipment and provide better WiFi coverage in the same locations. The entire system needed to be cloud-managed, configurable, and easy to maintain. Another important factor was the configuration of a splash page per area on the property, the key to providing enterprise level WiFi service to the guests.

Solution

“AFTER LOOKING AT THE ALTERNATIVES, we decided to remove and replace the existing vendor with Cambium Networks cnPilot™ E400 indoor and E500 outdoor access points (AP),” said Barrios. “The upgrade consisted of using the existing CAT 5e cabling, while not disrupting service to current guest and conference attendees. This minimized the cost, time, and inconvenience of the migration. We also changed from an onsite controller and implemented a cloud-based solution with Cambium Networks’ cnMaestro™ management system.”



“We selected Cambium Networks because they have a wide range of wireless connectivity products that cover our needs from outdoor Point-to-Point (PTP) backhaul links to both indoor and outdoor WiFi AP’s,” continued Barrios. “By going with Cambium Networks, everything can be configured on a single cloud-based management tool. One of the main determining factors for us in the hospitality business is to be able to create multiple splash pages per AP location, and we have that with cnMaestro. The best feature is that everything is hosted on the cloud and with a few simple clicks, we can configure a template in minutes. No hosting of any kind is required for the guest portal to work.”

“Technical support and troubleshooting is a 24/7 job in a hotel. With cnMaestro, the hotel IT team can easily log in remotely and customize a splash page or provide support for a customer in a matter of minutes. If any problem needs to be addressed by Cambium support, we can provide access to our online account and have live support.”

WIFI ACCESS

cnPilot™ E400 Enterprise Indoor WiFi Access Point
802.11ac dual band access point with MIMO
16 SSIDs supporting 256 concurrent users
Cloud-managed via cnMaestro. On-site controller option available

cnPilot™ E500 Enterprise Outdoor WiFi Access Point
802.11ac dual band access point with MIMO
16 SSIDs supporting 256 concurrent users
Cloud-managed via cnMaestro. On-site controller option available

Results

“THE UPGRADE PROCESS TOOK LESS THAN A DAY,” SAID BARRIOS. “BEFORE ANY EQUIPMENT WAS INSTALLED, every device was on-boarded with the profile information based on the location of the AP. This made the upgrade a simple plug and play deployment, without disrupting service to current guests.”

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Network expansion to cover the entire property is currently under way.