

Tire Rack Accelerates Operations with Xirrus Wi-Fi Access Points



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JEAN ROBERSON,
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER,
TIRE RACK



Overview

SINCE 1979, TIRE RACK HAS GROWN from a single retail store in Indianapolis to become America’s largest independent tire tester and consumer-direct source for tires, wheels and performance accessories. The company now encompasses two million square feet of space and has six distribution centers across the country. Maintaining this growth and a thirty-year commitment to high-quality performance products, expert advice, fast shipping and exceptional pricing has demanded cutting-edge technology. Today, Xirrus Wi-Fi APs are accelerating employee collaboration at the company’s headquarters, allowing Tire Rack to put more Americans on the road.

Faced with the critical bandwidth demands of their internal marketing department, planners at Tire Rack decided to implement a wireless network that would provide complete Wi-Fi coverage to its new office annex in South Bend, Indiana. Tire Rack’s team needed a network that would allow employees to collaborate using a wide range of bandwidth-intensive applications which involve sending, sharing, and transferring multihundred-megabyte media-rich files.

To enable the marketing department to reach full productivity, network planners would also need sufficient capacity to support more than 150 users, span three stories and several hundred thousand square feet, and allow for seamless roaming as users move between offices and conference rooms.

“Tire Rack’s marketing team decided that they could no longer afford to stop a project, meeting, or brainstorm session due to wireless bandwidth issues,” said Blake Williams, enterprise account executive at Zones.

A Convincing Wireless Experience

TIRE RACK WAS INTRODUCED TO XIRRUS WI-FI while attending the Interop Vegas 2012 enterprise IT show. As the sole choice for high-density, high-performance wireless access for the conference, Xirrus Wi-Fi APs had demonstrated that they could meet the aggregated wireless needs of thousands of attendees toting smartphones, tablets, and other wireless devices. Tire Rack executives cited the reliable network connectivity, minimal equipment required, and low capital costs of Xirrus Wi-Fi APs in their decision.

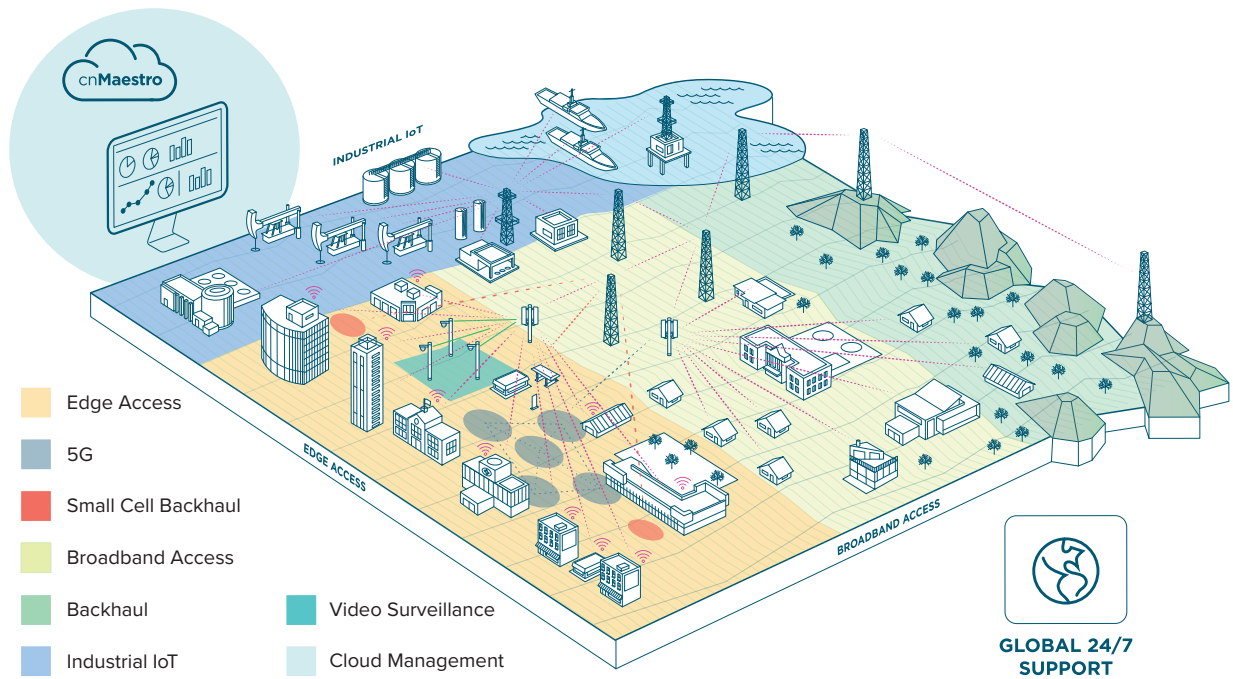
At Interop, Tire Rack saw firsthand how Xirrus Wi-Fi APs could seamlessly support thousands of people, many of whom had moved beyond email access and web browsing and into streaming media-rich applications and sending volumes of high-megapixel photos and advertisements,” said Bruce Miller, vice president, enterprise marketing at Cambium Networks. “Tire Rack’s decision came down to simple math: supporting multiple concurrent users collaborating on large files adds up to a requirement for highly scalable bandwidth and ubiquitous connectivity. That’s what Xirrus [Wi-Fi] delivers.

Fast Deployment of Fast Wireless

TIRE RACK'S DEMANDS WERE MET with a deployment of XR-4430 Wi-Fi APs. As part of the XR-4000 series, the 4 radio XR-4430 Wi-Fi AP delivers up to two times the coverage and two times the bandwidth and user density as legacy thin access points (APs). The XR-4430 models also include 4 open radio slots to support future doubling of capacity expansion and/or incorporation of next-generation 802.11ac technology. The multi-radio design and directional antennas of the AP minimized the number of devices that Tire Rack would need to deploy, resulting in savings in equipment, cables, switch ports, installation time, maintenance, and power consumption.

The entire Xirrus Wi-Fi system took just minutes to install, said Jean Roberson, chief information officer of Tire Rack, and each Wi-Fi AP took just 15 minutes to configure – quickly resulting in noticeable improvements.

Roberson commented: “The speed and performance of the Xirrus [Wi-Fi APs] are simply astounding. Xirrus [Wi-Fi] provides employees with the proper tools to maximize productivity and minimize congestion due to technical problems. We see our marketing department benefitting particularly from the installation of Xirrus [Wi-Fi], which allows multiple concurrent users to collaborate and share huge digital photos and advertisements with ease.”



Cambium Networks' Gigabit wireless solutions enable municipal, enterprise and service provider operators to tailor connectivity to meet exact requirements and grow as needs evolve.

In making the decision, Roberson also saw scalability and security as critical concerns. To monitor the network's capacity, the deployment included the Xirrus Management System (XMS), a wireless network management platform that provides full monitoring and management of the Xirrus Wi-Fi AP network via a web-based application with graphical map views. Tire Rack benefited from the XMS's integrated rogue detection, rogue mitigation, and client location detection to maintain a secure, high-functioning environment.

Endless Possibilities

NOW, WITH HUNDREDS OF CORPORATE EMPLOYEES FULLY WI-FI ENABLED, Tire Rack IT administrators are considering how high-performance wireless can benefit their team of over 100 test drivers (their sales teams) at the company's state-of-the-art, 11.7-acre test facility.

Roberson added: "We are only beginning to leverage this technology to empower our internal team and customers. Our test track hosts comprehensive tire tests throughout the year. Xirrus [Wi-Fi APs] will let our testers stand on the track infield gathering data completely wirelessly – a huge benefit for Tire Rack. What's even more exciting is the possibility of wirelessly streaming video feeds from in-car cameras as they traverse our test track – and the Xirrus system can handle it all, no matter the load."

Tire Rack executives are now using the headquarter's Xirrus Wi-Fi network as the model to roll out smaller Wi-Fi deployments in their remote tire centers and for new testing tracks.

"Tire Rack is an excellent example of how Xirrus [high-density Wi-Fi APs] transform business," says Miller. "The Xirrus [Wi-Fi APs] enable businesses to devote more time and energy to critical tasks, and to reduce hours devoted to fixing internal snafus. Xirrus [Wi-Fi] is allowing Tire Rack to focus on their business, and to explore new ways to exceed customer expectations."