



Brainerd Baptist Church & School

Tennessee Church and School Uses WLAN to Serve Students, Employees and the Congregation

Requirements

- Needed a pervasive wireless network for students and employees
- Needed a wireless network for congregation members during services
- An aging wireless network was unreliable and difficult to manage
- Needed a WLAN that was resilient, centrally administered, easy to manage, secure and cost-effective.

Results

- Aerohive WLAN allowed district to use many cloud-based applications
- Achieved highly-resilient, secure Wi-Fi
- Aerohive HiveManager provides centralized configuration and monitoring
- Aerohive has provided the church and school with a highly resilient wireless network that's both easy to manage and cost-effective

The Challenge

Brainerd Baptist Church and School of Chattanooga, Tennessee, consists of a 3,000 member church and 305 student school. The church has been serving the congregation for 82 years, and the school has been around for 59. It may be far from Silicon Valley or Silicon Alley, but Chattanooga is unique in that it has the fastest Internet in America and the third fastest in the world.

The church also has a family-life center across the street that has turned into a community center – it has a gym, coffee shop, basketball courts, etc. Each week, 1,100 people come through the building.

Like all businesses, schools or churches in older buildings these days, budgets and concrete walls are concerns. Plus, every school now has to deal with a huge influx of bandwidth-hogging wireless devices like Apple iPads, iPods, smartphones and laptops. And then there's the congregation and what a fast Aerohive wireless network has allowed them to leave behind on Sundays (more on that in a bit.)

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—Bradley Chambers
Director of IT
Brainerd Baptist Church and School

In this demanding environment, Ethernet-connected devices or traditional wireless networks – unreliable and difficult to manage – were simply not up to the task.

"From an IT innovation standpoint, wireless is a must," said Bradley Chambers, Director of IT. "It's the future of computing. We are near the tipping point to where if you were building a new building, you might not even do wired Ethernet."

"Being in IT means you have to evolve," Chambers added. "Ethernet ports are going the way of the Dodo bird."

Considering the Alternatives

Aerohive contacted Chambers in the summer of 2011.

"I usually don't like to take cold calls, but for whatever reason I did," Chambers said. "About half way through the webinar, a light went off for me. This is next-generation technology. I would have bought it that day, but I hadn't budgeted for a new WLAN."

Chambers decided to do his "due-diligence" and demo the Merkaki WLAN as well. He quickly found that "Aerohive was just a better fit for us."

Chambers said he also has a great relationship with his sales rep and reseller, Aerohive partner Image Communications out of Nashville.

Deploying the Network

Chambers currently has Aerohive APs to cover two buildings. During the day, the church/school has 250-300 people on the wireless network and on Sundays, they might have 500-600 people.

Aerohive was deployed in mid April 2012, and Chambers said he installed it over the course of a few days. The wiring was already in place, so it was just a matter of plugging APs in and pushing out the configuration.

"I spent more time walking to plug in the AP than I did working on them," Chambers said.

Focusing on Hosted Applications

For Brainerd, it's all about the cloud. Since they use such fast Internet speeds, they have moved all of their applications to hosted/cloud services. They use Google Apps for Email, Renweb for school management, ACS for financial and church management, Libsyn for media hosting, and MediaTemple for website hosting. They use a Sonicwall NSA 3500 for their firewall, HP ProCurve's for switches, and Aerohive for WLAN.

Security, and how the HiveManager takes care of it, are also huge selling points for Chambers.

"I also loved the fact that the Aerohive AP's have built-in firewalls," he said. "The firewall settings make it a breeze to make sure clients only get access to what I want them to get access to. I was recently talking with another school, and once I told him the AP's had firewall rules, he was sold."

The Result

What does Chambers like most about his new WLAN? "Simple management, future-proofed technology, and incredible products," he said. "While Aerohive has all the bells and whistles of a great WLAN system, you don't have to be a WLAN nerd to deploy it."

The church/school offers free guest WiFi and Aerohive makes it easy to do that. One of the most grateful groups at the church is the congregation. Fewer of them are bringing their dogged-eared Bibles to the pews, thanks to the popular tablet from Apple.

"A lot of people don't even carry a Bible to church anymore," Chambers said. "They're bringing the Bible on the iPad or iPhone." The church also offers a digital copy of the bulletin and sermon notes as well. So the congregation can not only access all this information during the service, they can stay online in Brainerd's coffee shop.

Apparently, technology is eclipsing the day when carrying your care-worn Bible with the missing pages was a sign of your devotion. Chambers summed it up for this next-generation of churchgoers: "I've got a really nice Bible, and I don't want it to get wet when it rains. So I leave it at home."

What's next?

"We firmly believe that the iPad is the future of education," Chambers said. "It's lightweight, always on, and easy to use. It's transparent technology. In terms of laptops, we believe that the MacBook Air is the future."

As even more wireless devices arrive on the scene, Chambers has plans to add more APs to the church/school complex. "Aerohive is really a company to watch out for, he said. "I'm not a WLAN expert, but it seems like all the people who are, have somehow ended up at Aerohive."



Contact us today to learn how your organization can benefit from Aerohive wireless LAN architecture.

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