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Chuck Flournoy,
IT Director, Houston Technology Center

COMPANY NAME:
Houston Technology Center

INDUSTRY: Technology Business Accelerator

COMPANY WEBSITE:
www.houstontech.org

GEOGRAPHIC REGION:
Houston, Texas



CASE STUDY: TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

TECHNOLOGY INCUBATOR LIVES UP TO ITS NAME WITH NETGEAR® PROSAFE® WIRELESS SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

Established in 1999, the Houston Technology Center (HTC) is a technology business incubator and accelerator, serving the entire Houston Metropolitan area. The not-for-profit organization helps emerging technology companies grow and move towards commercialization by providing them with in-depth strategic and tactical business guidance, fundraising advice, and connecting them to opportunities, allies, and capital. As the largest technology business incubator and accelerator in Texas, HTC's mission is to enable and accelerate the growth of emerging technology companies for the purpose of creating jobs and promoting economic development in the greater Houston area.

HTC's headquarters consists of a pair of three-story, 50 thousand square-foot buildings. In addition to offices for HTC staff, the two buildings also include a conference center and event space from which the organization frequently hosts client and sponsor events. HTC also rents office space to several HTC members.

PROBLEM/OBJECTIVE

UNRELIABLE WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY WITH INADEQUATE COVERAGE

Over the past several years, the Houston Technology Center has evolved its network to facilitate expanding connectivity needs and advancing technology requirements. "We were completely cabled up throughout both buildings," says Chuck Flournoy, IT Director for the Houston Technology Center. "But as years went by, we needed Wi-Fi connectivity to keep pace with our needs, as well as those of our members." HTC had added wireless to its network a little at a time, as budget allowed. As a result, the organization had a wide range of equipment from different vendors which did not work together and provided wireless coverage that was inadequate and unreliable. "We had different sign-ons for each conference room and connections would regularly drop in between rooms," says Chuck. "People would do a site inspection and ask about the Wi-Fi; I'd just hang my head. It was downright embarrassing, and certainly not befitting an organization that has 'Technology Center' in its name."

To encourage continued growth, HTC needs to draw new members to his facility, but the lack of adequate, reliable wireless connectivity presented a major obstacle. The organization even had to procure temporary switches and access points for a recent event that would entail a few hundred simultaneous users. But Chuck knew that it was just a temporary fix to a larger problem. He needed to find a permanent solution to avert a significant decline in membership.

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SOLUTION

NETGEAR® PROSAFE® SATISFIES ALL REQUIREMENTS AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE

Chuck developed a comprehensive plan to ensure that he could achieve all of HTC's goals at the lowest possible cost. Throughout an exhaustive process that included independent research, as well as conversations with industry experts, Chuck determined that NETGEAR ProSAFE could meet or exceed all of HTC's needs and still fit within their budget. Chuck worked closely with wireless networking experts from NETGEAR to ensure that he could achieve 100 percent coverage throughout both buildings. The NETGEAR team used a remote site survey to get initial report on what was required, then Chuck gave them feedback on his needs and experiences. The NETGEAR team used that additional input to tune the report to finalize the specific number needed.

HTC purchased 11 ProSAFE WNDAP 360 and two WNDAP660 access points, as well as two gigabyte PoE switches, one in each building. He also purchased a WC7600 Wireless Controller to manage the entire wireless system.

RESULTS

NETGEAR PROSAFE DELIVERS

Operating on a tight budget, Chuck decided to do the entire deployment himself, rather than hiring an installer. "The installation was remarkably easy," says Chuck. "The biggest challenge was running cables. The ability to just attach to rails in a standard drop ceiling makes it really easy; I can have one mounted on the included rails in less than five minutes." In addition to the ease of installation, Chuck really appreciates the simplicity provided by the WC7600 Wireless Controller. In his older system, he had to manually distinguish one access point from another, but now he can just do everything from right within the controller. It also enables him to pull up a statistics page to see exactly how the system is performing, determine which units are the busiest, gain interesting insights into current traffic patterns throughout both buildings, and deploy new applications in a matter of minutes.

"Before the NETGEAR ProSAFE system, we pretty much only had coverage in the conference rooms, and even that was spotty," says Chuck. "Now we have full coverage across the entire facility. NETGEAR has changed the way we provide service to our tenants. And if a new tenant moves in and changes the wireless density, no problem, I can simply add more access points."

Prior to the NETGEAR ProSAFE wireless system, Chuck was embarrassed to tell any members about their wireless system. But now his attitude is, "bring it, we're good!"



ProSAFE® WNDAP360



ProSAFE® WNDAP660



ProSAFE® WC7600

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