



Wireless network, VoIP phone system and support a home run with fans and employees

Customer Profile: One of the American League’s eight charter franchises in 1900, the 2005 World Series champion Chicago White Sox have one of the most colorful and storied histories in all of Major League Baseball. The ballclub consistently draws roughly two million rabid fans to U.S. Cellular Field each year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
CHICAGO WHITE SOX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major League Baseball team Chicago, Illinois USA Attendance nearly 2 million in 2012
BUSINESS CHALLENGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide wireless access to employees Allow transfer of parking passes between fans Enhance public safety Deliver a better fan experience
NETWORK SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install Cisco VoIP phone system Upgrade internal Cisco wireless network Install Cisco outdoor wireless mesh network Provide 24x7 support
BUSINESS RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full wireless coverage inside the ballpark and in parking lots for employees and fans Raised employee productivity Improved availability Delivers emergency messages to staff via phone, text, email

Situation

With a history dating to the turn of the previous century, when fans would arrive at the ballpark via trolleys and horse-drawn carriages and ballplayers would travel to games via train, it is easy to picture the behind-the-scenes operation of the Chicago White Sox in sepia-colored images. The reality, however, is that running a modern Major League Baseball (MLB) franchise requires a significant commitment to the latest technologies.

Yet shortly after securing a World Series Championship in 2005, the White Sox organization came to realize it needed some state of the art technology upgrades in order to continue serving its fan base, as well as its internal employees and sub-contractors, at a major league level.

“To start, we had an old analog phone system that was at the end of its life,” says Don Brown, Senior Director of Management Information Systems for the White Sox. “It worked, but it didn’t have the productivity-enhancing features our employees needed to up their game. We had very little in the way of wireless access within the ballpark, which made it difficult to keep up

with a business that is increasingly Internet-based. We also heard from season ticket holders that they couldn’t resell or transfer their parking passes electronically when they resold, reprinted or printed their tickets online, which was a huge inconvenience for them. As a championship organization we don’t like being behind, whether it’s on the field or off.”

Brown also wanted to upgrade the White Sox organization’s ability to respond to and communicate during emergencies, whether it was an injury, a weather-related problem, or other incidents requiring a quick response. Finally, he wanted a partner that could manage the new systems post-installation so he didn’t have to hire the expertise internally.

Solution

Brown first brought in Single Path, a Cisco Premier Partner, to install the internal Cisco wireless network for employees and game day press, broadcasters, and photographers. Single Path later had to be approved by the Illinois Sports Facility Authority (IFSA), the governing body for the ballpark, to be confirmed as Brown’s choice from among several potential partners for the VoIP phone upgrade.

Single Path began by upgrading the network infrastructure with Cisco routers and switches, and adding Cisco security. Later efforts included installing the VoIP phone system with Cisco Call Manager, a Cisco wireless mesh network for the parking lots, and overseeing it all with Single Path monitoring, management and help desk services. More recently they added more than 200 wireless access points around the ballpark for use by fans.

Business Results

While the Chicago White Sox may be one of the oldest franchises in MLB, it is now one of the most cutting-edge in terms of its use of technology. Every piece is working as-planned, which has helped the team operate more effectively and efficiently.

"The parking lot wireless mesh network is a great example," says Brown. "We were one of the first teams in all of baseball to extend wireless access to the outdoor lots. Before, the only way to gain access to them was to pay cash at the entrance or have a printed parking pass. Now our season ticket holders can resell, transfer, or reprint the pass online along with the tickets and have them scanned wirelessly by the attendants. That's made our fans very happy."

The internal private wireless system was also an immediate hit with employees as well as the press, broadcast teams and photographers who cover the games. Fast wireless access meant employees could do their jobs from anywhere in the ballpark using a variety of devices instead of having to find an available network PC. It also meant the media could look up information and file stories faster, and upload game action photos as they happened.

The new Cisco VoIP phone system has made a huge impact on the operation's, efficiency and ability to manage emergencies.

"With the old phone system all we could do was make calls," Brown says. "With the Cisco Unified Communications platform from Single Path we enhanced our phone system functionality, but also gained advanced features that deliver major productivity gains. The organization can now click to call from desktops, integrate voice over our state of the art WLAN, allow for intelligent call routing to the sales/marketing team, create screen pops through our CRM application, and deliver an integrated public safety solution for employees and vendors. It's an incredibly powerful system, very 21st Century."

One other item that was very important to Brown was having a partner who could not only install all this new technology but manage it for the White Sox afterward.

"I didn't want to have to hire internal staff to manage the phones or other technologies," Brown says. "Single Path takes care of all of that for me. They monitor our systems 24/7 and alert me immediately to any issues. If it's something they need to handle they're on-site quickly. Everything they've done has been a home run for us."

The most recent project has been working with Boingo to deliver free wireless Internet service to fans within the ballpark. Brown expects the system will be ready to handle the wireless needs of our fans on Opening Day.

"I have a lot of things that may keep me up at night. The work Single Path does and the technologies they monitor aren't included in that. We have a friendly atmosphere with them, they're very responsive, and they know our systems and the ballpark inside-out. I work with 25 vendors of varying technical expertise. Single Path is definitely on the A-list."

— Don Brown, Senior Director of Management Information Systems, Chicago White Sox

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