

CSI's integrated Wi-Fi creates a 'must-have' fan experience

In today's ever-changing world, wireless technology has become a "must-have" for sports venues and arenas. To be blunt, wireless is changing the way fans experience live entertainment. And no one knows that more than the folks at Cellular Specialties Inc. (CSI), a systems integrator that specializes in wireless technology located in Manchester, N.H.

"The growing trend toward facility-wide wireless voice and data solutions significantly improves communication for stadium visitors, and that means a richer fan experience," says Kelley Carr, president of CSI's Custom Solutions group and a company co-founder. "It's just amazing where society is going with wireless. If you think about being a fan 20-30 years ago, no one could have imagined they could someday check highlights and scores on cell phones or other wireless devices. Today, it's what the fans have come to expect. Technology is such a powerful conduit for information."

Carr explains that CSI provides reliable wireless solutions that allow spectators, employees, and public safety officials uninterrupted service to handle the increased traffic load during events. To do that, CSI (www.cellularspecialties.com), which has been in business for a decade, creates scalable solutions for sports venue clients that evolve as wireless requirements change.

According to Carr, key CSI benefits include:

- Increased productivity of staff with access throughout the entire stadium
- Maximized IT investment by ensuring

seamless, high-quality, reliable wireless communication

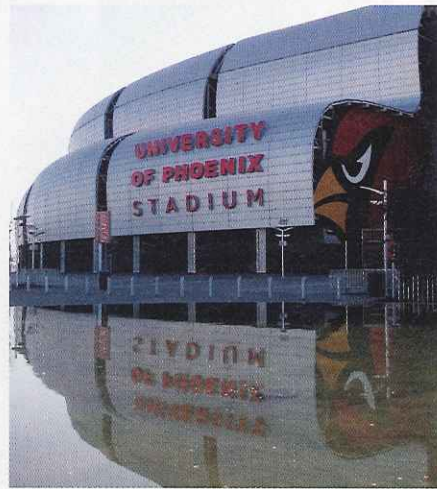
- Emergency management solutions and expedited response time
- Scalable installation and streamlined maintenance without disrupting regular network or facility operations.

CSI's major stadium and arena customers include the University of Phoenix Stadium, HSBC Arena, Ford Field, Bryce Jordan Center, Phoenix Coyotes, Minnesota Wild, Busch Stadium and the Toyota Center, among others.

"What we are seeing is the introduction of new types of fan experience solutions, based on the use of cell phones, smart phones, PDAs, etc.," Carr says. "Eventually, we know the NFL wants to use wireless so fans can come into a game and see instant replays of other games." Fans will also use the technology to keep up to date with what's going on within the NFL, purchase merchandise, send photos to friends and families during warm-ups, etc. On the service side, fans in the club seats, for example, could even use their wireless devices to order food and have it delivered to their seats.

Carr notes that the public safety coverage and communications wireless affords is critical with venue management staff.

"They have to be able to deliver services much quicker, whether that means broadcasting text messages to fans, or getting information to first responders to emergency situations" he says. "With reliable wireless, they can respond and communicate with each other, which means



Cellular Specialties integrated the University of Phoenix Stadium network with the team's headquarters and training center in Tempe, 21 miles away.

a much safer fan environment."

Perhaps no project illustrates how CSI and its wireless solutions can help boost the fan experience better than the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz., home of the NFL Arizona Cardinals. Completed in August 2006, the state-of-the-art stadium sports the latest wireless technology. So far, apart from Cardinal games, the 1.7 million square foot facility has hosted the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, the Bowl Championship Series National Championship games in January, and Super Bowl XLII in February 2008. In 2009, the stadium will host the regional basketball tournament of the NCAA men's basketball tournament.

CSI's job was to engineer a Distributed Antenna System (DAS) specifically designed to provide coverage for the stadium, working closely with the Cardinals' organization to ensure their communication needs were met. CSI also oversaw the entire installation process.

"One of the big things was that we wanted to ensure that customers in the building would be able to use the wireless device of their choice, whether it is a cell phone, personal digital assistant or laptop," Feller says.

The system has been up and running smoothly for more than two years now. The Rolling Stones held the first concert at the stadium in November 2006 before an audience of 40,000.

"I was walking through the crowd at the concert watching them enthusiastically making phone calls, relating the experience using cell phones and PDAs," says Mike Altman, western region sales manager of CSI. "It's clear that wireless communications is an amenity that is expected when someone goes to an indoor facility."

What is good for the fans is also good for the administrative offices in the stadium. At the same time the system enables customers to use their wireless voice and data handsets, the Cardinals can provide that same level of wireless local area network service to their employees; vendors and anyone else providing services within the stadium. Even before the stadium was finished, employees were using wireless laptops to manage construction and make other preparations. "We have a lot of office space in the stadium," says Feller. "Staff wanted to use Wi-Fi throughout the stadium for Internet, e-mail and WLAN use."

The stadium communications system also



The University of Phoenix Stadium project required communications for Cardinals' employees and visitors with wireless coverage across nearly two million square-feet.

According to Carr, the stadium project required communication for Cardinal employees and visitors with wireless coverage across nearly two million square-feet. The system supports multiple carriers including Verizon, Cingular, ATT and AllTel. The Cardinals also wanted a scalable, yet cost-effective solution, to support future growth without network disruption. Finally, the project required a single platform, which enables virtually any combination of wireless services, including cellular, paging, Wi-Fi, two-way radio, telemetry and public safety communication.

Mark Feller, vice president, technology, for the Arizona Cardinals, wanted to keep the system flexible to accommodate a variety of mobile devices and achieve its major goals for use. His vision was in concert with the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority, which owns and operates the stadium, and books it for football as well as a variety of events, from soccer matches to exhibitions and concerts.

is fully integrated with the network at the Cardinals' headquarters and training center in Tempe, 21 miles away. Employees can operate seamlessly, using the same telephone number, whether they are in the offices in Tempe or in the stadium in Glendale. Executives and staff now have the capability to communicate via videoconference and send data, game film and marketing materials back and forth. The team has full access to its database on the headquarters network from wireless laptops, whether it is in training camp in Flagstaff, Ariz., or while playing a game on the road.

"From an economic perspective, the design of the CSI DAS solution allows us to add new services to support any future applications without disrupting our existing wireless system," Feller says. "We were looking for the most efficient and practical way to deploy a communications system and do it right the first time, while covering as much technology ground as possible." FE

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