



Bringing a Better Office Experience to the Dining Room with Cloud-Managed Secure Wi-Fi

Bundled AirTight Wi-Fi and WIPS solution opens the doors to new applications while allowing the restaurant chain to achieve Level-1 PCI compliance.

Garden Fresh Restaurant Corporation recognized the role in-store Wi-Fi could play in improving its operational efficiency and in enhancing the work experience for its employees. But as a tier-1 merchant for PCI compliance, security was also a top priority.

So, in October 2011, the company started seeking proposals for an integrated solution that would offer secure and reliable Wi-Fi access across its 130+ distributed locations: restaurants, detached kitchens and distribution centers, and the headquarters, and also automate wireless monitoring, security and reporting across all those sites.

After evaluating different solutions, Garden Fresh selected Interface Security Systems (ISS), an AirTight Networks partner, as its network solution provider. Offered as a monthly subscription, the ISS managed services portfolio includes Internet connectivity with 4G backup, AirTight's cloud-managed Wi-Fi access and wireless intrusion prevention system (WIPS), and other network management and security services.

Workspace Freedom for Store Managers

Before rolling out Wi-Fi, the only place with Internet access in the various Souplantation and Fresh Tomatoes restaurants was the manager's office. With a significant amount of manager's work happening online – from checking the company's Intranet for regular updates to checking emails, it meant that the manager had to be confined to a cramped office at the back of the restaurant.

This had to change and was the main driver for the company's wireless initiative, according to Gerry Shukert, Director of IT Systems Development, Garden Fresh Restaurant Corp. "The whole initial point of having wireless Internet access in the stores was to allow the managers to get out of their offices and get their work done from anywhere in the store, without being confined to their office desk," he said.

The company's District Officer, or "DOs" as they are usually called, also significantly benefited from in-store Wi-Fi. Instead of commandeering the store manager's cramped office and desktop to get Internet access and communicate with the headquarters, the DOs were now able to sit anywhere in the dining area, use their laptop or tablet to seamlessly connect over Wi-Fi and get their job done quickly.

Endless Possibilities

In-store Wi-Fi has also opened endless possibilities for the company to start supporting new applications. Some of the already implemented and envisioned applications include easy Internet access for the company's Catering Coordinators, who arrange catered events for Garden Fresh customers; use of wireless PoS devices to take orders; the ability for prospective employees to fill out the online employment form; and last, but not the least, online employee training during work hours.

"In-store Wi-Fi access was a big breakthrough for the company's training department," Shukert noted. Paper-based training and then keeping track of whether or not employees had successfully completed the training, was extremely tedious. To make the training paperless and online, the company could not assume that employees had computers or the willingness to do the training at home.

With Wi-Fi access, employees can conveniently do the online training in the store and the training department can efficiently manage the training process.



COMPANY OVERVIEW

Garden Fresh Restaurant Corp. owns and operates over 130 restaurants across 15 states, under five brands: Souplantation, Sweet Tomatoes, Souplantation Express, Sweet Tomatoes Express and the newly introduced Field Kitchen. Its restaurants are widely recognized for their made-from-scratch menu and a wide assortment of fresh salads, fruits, and bakery and more in its all-you-can-eat buffet. The company is headquartered in San Diego, CA.

CHALLENGES

- Reliable and secure in-store Wi-Fi access to improve employee work experience
- Enable new applications for improved business efficiency
- Automated wireless security across distributed locations for Level-1 PCI compliance

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SOLUTION

AiTight Cloud Services™, which combine AirTight Wi-Fi™ for access with wireless intrusion prevention (WIPS) and PCI compliance scanning.

BENEFITS

- Store managers and district officers can work from anywhere in the store
- Flexibility to implement new applications over Wi-Fi in the future
- Built-in wireless security and reporting simplified PCI compliance



"Employees can make good use of their time during non-rush hours, say during 2 pm to 4 pm, when there aren't a lot of people in the restaurants," said Shurket.

Seamless Wi-Fi Experience

Plug-and-play AirTight Wi-Fi APs, whether deployed in the stores or in the headquarters, are automatically configured with consistent policies managed from a single centralized console that provides complete visibility to the entire deployment.

For instance, today, once an AirTight AP is plugged in a Garden Fresh location using IEEE 802.3af Power over Ethernet (PoE), the AP automatically connects to the AirTight cloud and downloads the configuration with three Garden Fresh corporate SSIDs. One of them is for WPA2 secured corporate Internet access. Gerry Shukert explained, "With the same SSID in all locations and employees being centrally authenticated using a corporate RADIUS server, our district officers and other authorized users can walk into any store and be instantly online over Wi-Fi with zero manual intervention on their part."

Implemented as a controller-less, 'intelligent edge' architecture, the AirTight solution eliminates the cost and complexity of the traditional controller-based architecture.

A unique feature that makes the AirTight solution ideal for enterprises like Garden Fresh Restaurant Corp. with hundreds of geographically distributed locations is AirTight's patented location-based management architecture. IT administrators can map the entire deployment visually in a hierarchical location tree and push consistent policies such as SSID configurations, radio properties, wireless intrusion detection and prevention settings, etc. across all sites.

"The beauty of it is the simplicity," said Shukert. "The Web interface is so easy to set up and intuitive with very good description on every screen. One can start to use it in 20 minutes. It's powerful and simple!"

CUSTOMER QUOTES

"The AirTight WIPS made detection of Rogue APs easier. It instantly detected the 4 Rogue APs we planted during our test and automatically shut them down."

"In 2012, we became a Level-1 merchant and naturally the security requirements for third-party scrutiny and PCI compliance were more stringent. That's when we plugged in AirTight and we passed the Level-1 PCI audit with flying colors."

– Gerry Shukert, Director of IT Systems Development, Garden Fresh Restaurant Corp.

#1 Security, Level-1 Compliance

Security and PCI compliance was a top priority for Garden Fresh when selecting the solution. "When choosing the solution, we looked at the service provider level more than the specific vendor level," Shukert continued. "However, we had seen a demo of the AirTight product prior to meeting ISS and were already impressed. So when ISS said they offered AirTight, it was much more compelling and made it an easier decision for us to go with them."

AirTight APs can provide high-speed 802.11n access, while monitoring for presence of unauthorized Wi-Fi devices and protecting the network from wireless threats such as Rogue APs, thus fulfilling the PCI DSS wireless security requirements.

Explaining the value of AirTight's industry leading and patented automatic Rogue detection and prevention techniques, Shukert said, "The AirTight WIPS made detection of Rogue APs easier. It instantly detected the 4 Rogue APs we planted during our test and automatically shut them down."

This in turn simplified PCI compliance, as Shukert explained, "In 2012, we became a Level-1 merchant and naturally the security requirements for third-party scrutiny and PCI compliance were more stringent. That's when we plugged in AirTight and we passed the Level-1 PCI audit with flying colors."

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Comprehensive Cloud-Managed Wi-Fi

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