CITY OF MONCTON
ROCKS TECHNOLOGY FOR SUCCESS

City of Moncton, New Brunswick

MONCTON

Overview

The City wanted to leverage Magnetic Hill, one of the largest concert venues in North America, as a part of their economic development plan. Softchoice provided recommendations for an onsite network infrastructure to support the management of a large concert venue.

Solution

Softchoice managed the design and implementation of a wireless infrastructure including a wireless over UC system, video conferencing between the concert venue and city hall, IP phones and secure firewalls.

Results

Each summer concert season the City asks Softchoice to be part of the preparation team, to ensure reliable secure communications for thousands of concert goers.

The Magnetic Hill venue has provided a huge boost to Moncton's economy and visibility around the world.

The city of Moncton is located in New Brunswick, in Canada's beautiful Maritime Provinces. Formerly a transportation hub for the Canadian National Railroad, the city experienced an economic downturn in the 1980s when the railroad closed its operations, resulting in unemployment and economic upheval.

The city quickly realized its new reality required a different approach to stimulate economic development and growth. Technology became a centerpin for many strategies to attract new business and recruit fresh talent from across the world into the city's workforce.

The strategies were very successful through the 1990s as the city became known as one of the largest call center locations in North America, with many major businesses relocating to take advantage of lower costs and a bilingual workforce.

With a history of encouraging technology and innovation, Moncton added another spur to growth in 2006 with the introduction of Canada's first free outdoor wireless mesh network. Spanning the downtown core, the wireless mesh network enables businesses and residents to take advantage of Internet access whenever and wherever they want it.

Building on the success of the wireless network, Moncton also incorporated Wi-Fi into its bus transportation system, helping reduce traffic congestion as more people started to opt for the convenience of easy connectivity using transit.

Technology that rocks

A few years ago, Moncton decided to further expand the network to include its Magnetic Hill Concert site. Magnetic Hill is one of the largest music venues in North America, able to accommodate a crowd of up to 100,000 people in a huge amphitheater setting.

Recognizing the unique possiblities that the Magnetic Hill venue offered, Moncton actively redeveloped it to attract major concerts to the site. Developing a "turn-key" operation, the site offers concert promoters a complete package including easy set-up and tear-down, a trained and experienced army of staff to handle everything from ticket sales to security and a state of the art Unified Communications (UC) infrastructure enabling VoIP, video and wireless. Taking a business-centric approach to the venue, Moncton focused on providing operational efficiencies, rapid response and positive outcomes to promoters, saving them time and money.

The result has been some of the highest grossing tours in North America coming to Magnetic Hill, from the Rolling Stones, The Eagles, Bon Jovi, AC/DC to last summer's final stop on U2's farewell tour.

Softchoice Partnership

Among the 2,500 people required to stage each individual event, there's always a team from Softchoice. When the site was redeveloped to accommodate major concerts, Softchoice was there, recommending the network topology and managing the design and implementation of the wireless infrastructure. Every year since, Moncton has added enhancements to the site and asked Softchoice to be part of the preparation team, to ensure reliable secure communications for the thousands of attendees.

"Softchoice has been a long standing partner. They originally came to evaluate the site and propose technology recommendations. They've implemented the entire infrastructure and we rely on them every year to ensure the site is ready for each concert as required."

Dan Babineau
CIO, City of Moncton

Over the past few years Softchoice has provided a wide range of services at Magnetic Hill including:

• Wireless technology to scan tickets tracking attendance.

• A UC over wireless system, which, while not the norm for UC, worked extremely well at the Magnetic Hill site. Last summer, U2 had specific requirements for the wireless system which required a rapid redesign of the infrastructure to provide multiple touchpoints, accomplished within days of the event.

• Cisco video conferencing between the concert site and City Hall locations via a site-to-site IPSEC VPN tunnel facilitated by Cisco ASAs, enables better communications and quicker decision making as well as security and traffic control.

• IP Phones to enable workers to stay in touch with each other and support conference calls with city managers as needed.

• Secure firewalls for wireless mobility for the venue promoters, for the bands and associated production crews and attendees.

The Magnetic Hill venue has provided a huge boost to Moncton's economy and presence around the world, which continues this summer with both Nickelback and Bruce Springsteen concerts scheduled.

Intelligent Community Forum – Smart 21

In 2009 and 2010, the city of Moncton was recognized by the Intelligent Community Forum as one of the Smart 21 Communities in the world for its foresight in leveraging technology as a means to adapt to changing economic times and positioning its citizens and businesses to prosper despite the worldwide economic downturn.

Moncton Today

Today, Moncton isn't resting on its achievements. Working with Cisco and Softchoice to upgrade its UC infrastructure, Moncton is expecting to achieve an ROI within 3 years, which they've already earmarked for reinvestment into new strategic IT initiatives.

The story of the city of Moncton is a great example of how a municipality can transform itself in just a few years from economic decline, to a progressive, innovative city attracting new business and new citizens, all through the intelligent use of technology and... a little help from rock and roll.