

Executive Summary

Industry

- Sports and Entertainment

Environment

- Hosts 175+ events a year
- Visitors/Year: 1,000,000
- Capacity: 21,000 Guests
- Access Points: 500
- Multicast Cameras: 250
- Networking Staff: 1

Challenges

- Need for universal wireless capacity / throughput to support Bell Centre's vision for fan engagement
- Need to accommodate 175 events per year, each with unique requirements
- Lean operations model, with a small dedicated IT team professional

Extreme Solution Components

- ExtremeSwitching™
 - VSP 7000 Series
 - VSP 9000 Series
 - ERS 4000 Series
- Extreme Fabric Connect

Results

- The stadium now supports online fan engagement, providing increased social media sharing and exposure for the hockey team, performers and the Bell Centre
- The VP of Technology configures the network quickly for whatever that day's event calls for
- One IT professional easily handles all network configurations
- More capacity has increased digital advertising revenue opportunities



Bell Centre, World's Third Largest Event Center, Scores Big with Fans

It was in the middle of an event at Montreal's Bell Centre when Pierre-Eric Belzile got the call. One of the event organizers needed immediate private access to the arena's Wi-Fi.

Belzile wasn't anxious for a moment. On the fly, the head of technology at the events center quickly added a service set identifier (SSID), giving the individual password-protected access to the center's wireless network.

"We created a new SSID for him in five minutes. That's how flexible our network is," says Belzile, Vice President, Information and Communication Technology at the Canadiens Hockey Club - evenko. "And it's stable. We're not scared at all to work on it - even during events."

It's just the kind of agility the Bell Centre needs to accommodate 175 events a year, from Montreal Canadiens professional hockey games to U2 concerts to Disney on Ice. Sometimes Belzile has a 'heads-up' about the performers' technology needs before they arrive; often, he doesn't know until the day of the show.

"We need to adapt to different technology requirements every day and be sure that it all runs smoothly," Belzile says. "We need a really flexible, secure and powerful network to handle anything that comes up."

Goal: Ramping Up Capacity

Montreal's Bell Centre hosts one million visitors a year, up to 21,000 people at a time – making it the largest hockey arena in North America and the third busiest event center in the world. The configurable, multi-event complex morphs to accommodate whatever takes place that day.

Performers expect nothing less than the latest technology to execute the vision for their shows or to conduct business while they're there. Likewise, fans expect to be able to share their experiences on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites.

"Fans want to do what they usually do, which is share what they're experiencing with their friends," comments Belzile. "We have to be able to support them with anything they want to do."

Until recently, the center's wireless network simply wasn't powerful enough to roll out to fans. The facility needed higher capacity to achieve its goals of social-, mobile- and internet-based fan engagement and other business objectives, such as digital advertising, anywhere point-of-sale transactions and IP video surveillance.

"The number of digital assets we're installing on the network, and guests requiring the network, is growing very rapidly. With Extreme, we found the right solution at the right cost. And we didn't have to spend millions to do so."

**Pierre-Eric Belzile, VP of Information and Communication Technology
Canadiens Hockey Club – evenko**

An Engaged Event Center

For more than a decade, the Bell Centre has relied on Extreme Networks for network connectivity. Once again, the organization turned to Extreme for the next phase in its unified digital strategy: upgrading the network and fortifying wireless capabilities.

Working closely with the Bell Centre, Extreme architected a virtualized, flexible network to support the event center's many goals, including high-capacity, better security for wireless access, fast Wi-Fi connection times and multicast support for IP video streams. The Bell Centre runs Extreme Fabric Connect at the core of the network, with the key

features of Virtual IST, IP shortcuts and IP multicast to simplify and ensure a resilient and high-performance network – allowing the Bell Centre to concentrate on providing the ultimate fan experience.

Belzile wanted a completely open wireless network – with no password and no landing page. Visitors can simply connect, and they do. In the 2014-2015 season, around 20 percent of guests at one event – with approximately 4,000 smart phones – jumped onto the network, pushing usage to around 250GB in a two-hour event timeframe.

Anywhere Connectivity

Ubiquitous wireless also supports the center's "ticketless" entry, a method requested by a number of performers to ensure that fans are able to buy tickets at face value, rather than at inflated resale prices. With ticketless entry, event attendees simply present the credit card they used to buy their tickets and a valid form of identification. A gate attendant swipes the card to verify the tickets, and the guest is admitted and on their way.

"It's a way for artists to be sure that their fans are the ones coming for the show, so we have to be flexible enough to accommodate ticketless entry at some doors," Belzile observes. "Now, we just bring the laptops and scanners we need to specific gates – anywhere in the building – to process ticketless guests."

The same goes for point-of-sale systems. Vendors can set up anywhere within the facility, helping maximize their revenue.

Limitless Possibilities

Belzile feels confident that the network can handle the center's vision for the future as well. With these new capabilities, the Bell Centre teamed with Extreme to create an application for fans of the Montreal Canadiens hockey team. In this fast-paced sport, fans could easily miss a goal if they leave their seats to grab a beer or a bite to eat.

With the app, fans can order refreshments and pay right from their seats, and have it delivered without missing a single play. They can also find maps of the stadium, purchase tickets for future games, and learn more about the team and the players.

Belzile also looks forward to expanding security on the strength of the network. Currently, door access on luxury suites is wirelessly managed, and several security cameras run over the network. Next, the Bell Centre will expand that to 250 multicast cameras. For Belzile, IP video surveillance brings greater capabilities to search for footage and higher quality images.

“IP multicast is one of the reasons why we went with Extreme, because it’s so easy to implement and use,” Belzile says. Higher bandwidth also enables the Bell Centre to add more digital advertising, and increase this major source of revenue.

“We run on one, strong, flexible network for all the digital assets we have at the Bell Centre,” he comments.

“We run on one, strong, flexible network for all the digital assets we have at the Bell Centre. Regardless of the operation, Extreme Networks can handle it. I don’t see any limitations.”

**Pierre-Eric Belzile, VP of Information and Communication Technology
Canadiens Hockey Club – evenko**

One-Man Show

For Belzile, the beauty of the network is not just in its capabilities, but in the ease of management for him as Bell Centre’s only IT professional.

“What we needed was a really flexible, secure and easy-to-manage network,” remarks Belzile. It’s so easy to manage, I can do it myself, alone.”

“I like coming in in the morning because it’s a big toy and I’m pleased to play with it,” Belzile says. “We have zero people working on the networking team at the Bell Centre. It’s just me and good support from my Extreme team.”

Solutions

- Virtual Services Platform 7000 Series
- Virtual Services Platform 9000 Series
- Ethernet Routing Switches 4000 Series
- Wireless LAN 9100 Series
- Extreme Fabric Connect

About evenko

evenko is a Quebec-based company which has become the biggest independent show distributor/ producer in Canada and is the exclusive event manager for the Bell Centre. Presenting more than 1,000 events annually throughout the province of Quebec, evenko was ranked as the top promoter in Canada in January 2014 by Pollstar and 10th across North America. evenko events and productions helped place Bell Centre among the top-ten best ranked arenas.

About Bell Centre and evenko

Bell Centre, located in downtown Montreal, Quebec, Canada, attracts over 1 million visitors and is the site for hundreds of events each year including home games for local professional NHL team, the Montreal Canadiens. The complex is filled with a variety of entertainment activities and professional events 175 days a year with the capacity to fill the house ranging from 21,000 for professional hockey games, to 9,000 for theater style seating, and 16,000 for other sporting events. Formerly Molson Centre, the arena was renamed Bell Centre in 2002 and replaced the Montreal Forum which was known as the “most storied” building in hockey history. With a capacity of 21,273 seats, Bell Centre is the largest arena for hockey in North America.



<http://www.extremenetworks.com/contact>

©2019 Extreme Networks, Inc. All rights reserved. Extreme Networks and the Extreme Networks logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Extreme Networks, Inc. in the United States and/or other countries. All other names are the property of their respective owners. For additional information on Extreme Networks Trademarks please see <http://www.extremenetworks.com/company/legal/trademarks>. Specifications and product availability are subject to change without notice. 12065-0319-12