

## Dallas Market Center Offers New Wireless Access to Temporary Market Exhibitors

By Julie Zorn Shipp

As the saying goes, everything's bigger in Texas, and Dallas Market Center is no exception. Currently the world's most complete wholesale marketplace, Dallas Market Center is comprised of four buildings – World Trade Center, Trade Mart, International Floral & Gift Center® and Market Hall – totaling more than five million square feet of space (that's larger than the Sears Tower and roughly twice the size of the Empire State Building).

Containing approximately 2,000 permanent showrooms as well as temporary exhibit show space, Dallas Market Center is where buyers and sellers meet. With more than 400,000 people visiting the center and \$8.5 billion in estimated annual wholesale transactions, Dallas Market Center's sellers offer products ranging from home furnishings, gifts, decorative accents, lighting, garden accessories, gourmet items, holiday décor, textiles, fashion accessories and apparel.

The largest building on the campus is World Trade Center, standing 15 stories tall. Nestled on the 12th and 13th floors of the World Trade Center building is the temporary market space, which spans more than 300,000 square feet. Data access is essential to conducting business, as it enables exhibitors to do everything from processing transactions to accessing real-time information through the Web.

Housing three major temporary markets each year in the World Trade Center, Dallas Market Center needed a better way to provide Internet access to exhibitors. Contrary to permanent exhibitors who typically sign extended contracts for communications services, exhibitors at temporary shows only need Internet access for a few weeks each year. To gain Internet access in the past, a site survey would be conducted for each temporary show, and exhibitors who required Internet access had to place an order well in advance. Cables were run to each booth, creating a technologically complex and time-consuming process.

To improve exhibitor's experience and continue to attract business, Dallas Market Center set its sights on offering wireless access in the temporary exhibit

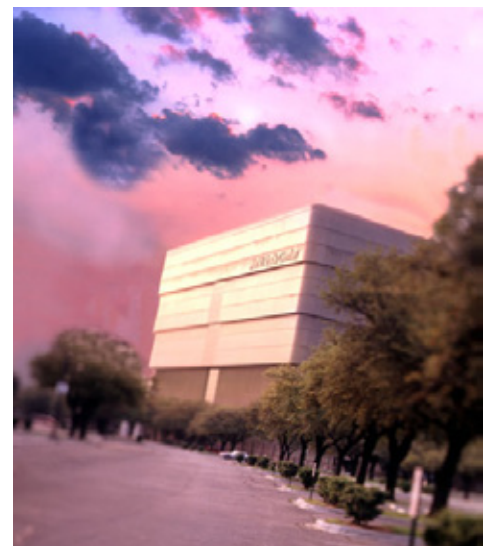


space but needed to avoid major investments in time and money. Ultimately, Dallas Market Center turned to their long-time communications partner, Cypress Communications, to bring this highly coveted functionality to the World Trade Center building.

"Dallas Market Center's goal is to offer the best market experience to our exhibitors," said Steve Dumas, vice president of corporate services at Dallas Market Center. "It's important for us to have high-quality wireless Internet access available for our temporary exhibitors at prices lower than our competitors."

### INSTALLATION/ PROJECT INFORMATION

For the marketplace, Cypress deployed the latest in wireless technology to create a comprehensive wireless network. They worked closely with Dallas Market Center to implement a customized solution. Both wireless N and G technologies were considered for the project. Wireless N technology was ultimately selected for its speed and ability to allow a higher satu-



ration of Wi-Fi users per access point.

Utilizing best-of-breed Cisco equipment, project managers implemented an 802.11n network comprised of 20 access points. The complete system design included a Cisco router, wireless controller, Catalyst

2960 Series switches with fiber uplinks and wireless access points (WAPs).

To install the wireless network throughout the two-floor, 300,000 square foot space, a number of challenges had to be overcome, with the first major challenge being distance. The sheer size of the space and inherent distance limitations of Category 5/6 cabling made it impossible to utilize a traditional design. Working with the Dallas Market Center, the team met this challenge head on, designing a fiber optics network to interconnect multiple wiring closets using Cisco switches.

To create the other elements of the wireless system design, experts and local Dallas resources utilized Cisco's WCS software. CAD drawings of the space were digitized and imported into

the WCS platform. This, along with a comprehensive site survey, was used to create the initial optimum coverage design.

In the initial design, the WAPs were placed with the assumption that exhibitors would construct tall walls during markets. However, the temporary market space has an unfinished ceiling with exposed I-beams, which presented a few more design challenges. In addition to having the potential to interfere with radio signals, the I-beams were also coated with a fire-retardant surface, making it difficult to mount the WAPs without damaging the coating.

The team opted to align the WAPs with the bot-

tom of the I-beams. Another walkthrough was conducted to determine how far the WAPs needed to be moved to create the optimal network and minimize any potential interference. The revised mounting locations were then updated in the WCS software to verify floor coverage and tweak the WAP placement. Powering the WAPs was the final challenge to overcome, as installing 20 power outlets would have been costly and complex. Ultimately, Cypress opted to utilize Power over Ethernet (PoE) to power the WAPs.

From the start of the wiring through testing and go-live, the installation took approximately one month to complete. The network went live in time for the TIA Fall Toy Preview, held annually at Dallas Market Center.

## WIRELESS MARKETPLACE BENEFITS

The wireless LAN enables Dallas Market Center to bring more value to World Trade Center temporary exhibitors and increase their competitiveness in the market-hosting industry. There's no additional cabling required for the temporary market space, and exhibitors only need wireless capabilities on their computers. The wireless network can be accessed on-demand by the temporary exhibitors, eliminating the cost and complexity of running individual cabling to each booth during markets. Exhibitor's benefit from quick turnaround time in gaining Internet access, robust bandwidth and reasonable pricing.

The wireless network has a number of additional benefits for Dallas Market Center, the foremost being its cost advantages. As the hosted provider, Cypress monitors and maintains all of the equipment, ensures quality of service metrics are being met and assists with on-site wireless card configuration support for exhibitors, removing these burdens from Dallas Market Center staff. ■

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