

□ D-LINK PROVIDES WIRELESS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR “HOT” ISLAND IN THE SEYCHELLES

Case summary:

In an effort to meet guest expectations for Internet connectivity, Wilderness Safaris has designed and installed the first phase of its wireless network plan for its luxury resort located on North Island in the Seychelles. The full strategy aims to see majority of the island becoming a hot spot, accessible by guests and employees alike at no cost.

Client Background: An island paradise

Publicised as a private island sanctuary, the Seychelles' North Island is a partly owned, wholly managed resort within the stable of inbound tour operator, Wilderness Safaris. Catering to the rich and sometimes famous, the private island is one of the 40 granite inner islands of the Seychelles that are located around the two main islands of Mahé and Praslin.

This is no ordinary holiday resort; the six-star development on North Island aims to provide the very best in privacy, location, accommodation, services, facilities and experience to the most discerning of travellers. However, within that intention, the company and its resorts are passionately focused on creating an environment that results in the sustainable and ecologically-sensitive use of the natural treasures.

Connecting discerning guests the wireless way

North Island is an exclusive resort that attracts high-level international travellers, who expect luxury seclusion while still needing to maintain contact with businesses back home. Accustomed to international standards, guests rarely entertain the notion that Internet connection may not be available.

Additionally, the resort's employees live most of the year on the island with very few communication channels available for keeping in touch with friends and family.

While the resort had Internet connectivity in some of its offices Wilderness Safaris' IT manager Willem Cronjé says the initial infrastructure that was also used for the voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) telephony system could not handle the distances required to connect staff quarters, chalets and some management offices situated away from the main building.

“Guests at North Island very rarely, if ever, get to see the working mechanisms that allow a resort of this kind to deliver on its promise of luxury. The twelve Villas are blended naturally into the environment with operating functions such as the laundry and housekeeping offices away from the main area. In most cases there are considerable distances to travel through dense vegetation,” he explains.

Cronjé adds, “In addition to these requirements we looked for reliability. We do not have an IT manager on the island and getting someone out here to solve any issues takes time and is very costly.”

D-Link provides a cost-effective, reliable solution

After consultation with several technology providers, D-Link reseller Darro Electronics proposed a solution based on the vendor's D-LinkAir DWL-900-AP+ wireless networking equipment.

Although Cronjé had already decided on a wireless product set from a different vendor, Robert Hannaford, director at Darro, demonstrated the efficacy of the D-Link equipment at his own offices. Comments Hannaford: “We are so confident of the reliability and performance of the D-Link equipment that we provide that we have it running in our own offices. This also serves as an ideal reference site for potential customers to evaluate the equipment in the field.”

Cronjé adds, “For us, the demonstration was really the proof of the pudding. The D-Link access points were more price competitive than what we had initially opted for, but most importantly, Darro had done the testing, invested in the product for its own use and were willing to show us what the 802.11b technology could do.”

With the technology selected, the planning phase began. Pierre Holtzhausen, networking specialist at distributor Drive Control Corporation, says the planning phase was particularly interesting.



"Unfortunately, we were unable to get a trip to the Seychelles to do a site survey, so the planning was done with the aid of a variety of visuals including topographical maps, overhead photographs and plans of the North Island resort. It made for an out of the ordinary network design," he says.

Furthermore, while wireless offered the best solution in terms of nature conservation, the dense vegetation on the island was cause for concern.

Cronjé explains, "Vegetation is not conducive to wireless networking. In some areas we were able to get around it by mounting dishes unobtrusively on coconut trees, but the areas with really dense vegetation posed a potential problem. Eventually we decided on higher gain antennas for these areas, elevating them above most of the other regions."

Technical specifications: D-LinkAir DWL-900AP+

The D-LinkAir DWL-900AP+ 2.4GHz Enhanced Performance Wireless LAN Access Point gives 2.4GHz wireless LAN users fast, secure access to an IEEE 802.11b wireless Local Area Network (LAN).

"With data transfer rates at up to 22Mbps, this Access Point provides twice the speed of other IEEE 802.11b Access Points, while adding a strong 256-bit security scheme for data traveling over the network," says Tobie van Schalkwyk, sales manager at D-Link Africa.

He notes that the equipment strictly complies with industry standards, to provide speed, security and other enhanced features, without compromising interoperability with all 802.11b wireless LAN equipment and Ethernet-based networks.

At 22Mbps, the DWL-900AP+ delivers high data transfer rates within the 802.11b industry standard - double the 11Mbps normally found in other 2.4GHz wireless LAN Access Points, he adds.

"Importantly, the increased speed is achieved without compromising compatibility; with both WiFi certification and IEEE 802.11b wireless LAN industry standard compliance, the DWL-900AP+ provides clients with excellent network interoperability should they have a heterogeneous environment," says van Schalkwyk.

The DWL-900AP+ is equipped with an SMA reverse detachable dipole antenna with an effective range of 100 meters indoors, or 400 meters outdoors. Where a longer range is required, the antenna can be replaced with a higher gain model.

Easy and rapid implementation

Implementation proved to be relatively simple once on site - but getting there posed something of an issue.

"Because North Island is secluded and the mainland is a fair distance away - and relatively unsophisticated - we needed to be sure that we had every possible screw and tool with us. Everything was counted and checked multiple times," Cronjé explains.

Cronjé and Hanniford completed the installation in three trips without any problems and the network quickly became available in all the earmarked areas.

Results: The connected experience

Wilderness Safaris reports that the first step in making North Island a 'hot' Island has proven to be a significant success, achieved at a low cost owing to the highly competitively pricing of D-Link network equipment. The project fee, which included product, flights and transport, amounted to a very reasonable sum of just R50 000, and resulted in the establishment of 10 access points on the island.

Guests are now able to wirelessly connect to the Internet in the front areas bar, restaurant, library and lounge and should they not have a wireless card or laptop, the resort has extras on hand. Furthermore, management offices have been connected throughout the island and the provision of an Internet café for employees.

The next phase will see the establishment of a wireless Internet connection in the villas and the cocktail bar, located on the other side of the island, which will also be linked into the resorts' point of sale system.

Cronjé concludes, "The D-Link technology has delivered remarkable stability and reliability with all stakeholders happy with the services enabled. As a result of this, we will be using the D-Link products for our other resorts as well as our head office."

