



Penrith City Council Unwires

Penrith City Council's charter is to equitably provide community services and facilities to the city of Penrith in Sydney's west. To do this, the council employs some 1000 full-time and contract staff, who carry out a wide range of roles. While about half of them fulfil management and administration roles in the head office complex, the remainder do not work in the office and many also work outside of regular business hours; these include road maintenance staff, building inspectors, general repairers and parking officers.

With multiple department buildings, a mobile workforce and a geographically diverse community to serve, the council was looking to improve their communications network to enable them to operate more efficiently by streamlining communication, lowering costs and boosting productivity.

Growing Pains

Faced with a flourishing community, limited budgets and ever-increasing demands for services and information, Penrith City Council realised their existing IT infrastructure was holding them back. At the time, the three buildings to be connected by wireless were connected via ISDN at 64K data transmission rate.

With rapidly growing information needs, these links were proving unworkable due to network connectivity problems, unreliable response and speed issues hampering productivity. To share information between departments across the offices, staff were burning large files onto CDs and manually transferring the data, because sending information via the network or email was unreliable and slow.

The decision to move to a wireless network was a strategic one for the council, as Richard Baczelis their IT Manager explains; "Located among thick bushland and separated by a river, networking our office buildings has always been a challenge. To solve this I saw the huge potential of wireless technology; not only to help us today, but also to position us well for the future."

On Air

After a comprehensive tender process, the council selected Allcom Networks as their partner to design and implement a wireless network solution. Working together, Allcom and the IT team at Penrith City Council developed a fast wireless network linking the three offices with dramatically improved bandwidth.

Penrith City Council selected Cisco's Aironet 350 series bridges utilising Yagi type antennae to form point to point links to each office location. This design ensured maximum availability and throughput.

Cisco's Aironet series also provides the highest level of security offered for wireless products and Cisco's ongoing support and updates ensure the level of security that the council required for their network.

One other design aspect to using the Aironet 350 bridges was their ability to be powered utilising POE (Power Over Ethernet) thereby reducing the installation cost by removing the requirement to have power cabling installed in close proximity to the wireless bridges; this also provided additional benefits by reducing losses in cabling lengths running to the antennae.



Wireless

Case Study

Penrith City Council

The challenge

To improve data communications between staff in three buildings, remote workers and contractors while increasing flexibility and reducing costs.

The solution

A secure 802.11b wireless network

The benefits

- Recurrent annual cost savings
- Fast communications leading to increased productivity
- Cost-effective and easily manageable scalability



About Allcom

Since 1996, Allcom has provided effective and innovative IT solutions

Our solutions include total system integration encompassing the implementation of leading edge technologies and infrastructure design.

Regardless of whether you want to streamline communications between branches, speed up network transactions, implement an effective customer contact centre, incorporate wireless networking, introduce new applications or strengthen the security of your network, Allcom can design and implement a proven solution. Contact our friendly, professional team.

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“ Located among trees and separated by a river, networking our office buildings has always been a challenge. Working with Allcom, we recently set a fast wireless network solution across the three offices. Now we can easily email large attachments internally and share all our files over the network much faster with no additional costs. ”

Richard Baczelis, IT Manager, Penrith City Council



Cost Efficiencies

With the Allcom wireless solution in place, the council is realising recurrent savings and has far greater bandwidth. By implementing a wireless network, the council has been able to remove the ISDN services for these sites and reduce the high annual costs. With the new wireless network, data transmission rates are up to 11MB between offices and 2MB for more remote locations. Baczelis comments, "We we can easily email large documents internally, share all our files and applications much faster and communicate smoothly with no additional ongoing costs".

The solution also delivers a highly secure network environment, achieved using the Cisco LEAP protocol.

The Council Of The Future

Despite extensive rain throughout the installation and challenging terrain on the site, Allcom kept the project well on track, making adjustments in the field as needed to suit the conditions.

"We've worked with Allcom on a number of specialist networking projects over the years, they are always extremely responsive with great technical expertise", said Baczelis.

When it comes to adopting innovations in information technology, Penrith City Council has long been among the leading councils in Australia. They have embraced technology as a way to better use their resources to provide essential services to their community.

Richard Baczelis is particularly optimistic about the potential of wireless technologies and is strongly behind their adoption. "One of the fundamental changes I expect to see in the way local governments operate in the near future is the uptake of mobile devices and wireless technology. Enabling 24-hour access to information, systems and services on the road will mean an enormous increase in customer service and efficiencies. Capturing data in real-time will enable us to do more for the community within our budgets by keeping staff doing their real job on the road rather than back in the office writing up reports and data entry.

"The proven success of this wireless project completed with Allcom greatly encourages us to pursue the introduction of more mobile services. Now that we know for sure that stability, security and management are not an issue, we can move forward with confidence."

