

RedCell resolves a fundamental WLAN problem plaguing the cruise line industry, and helps Silversea increase revenue, improve customer satisfaction and deliver unique, value-added services.

Silversea Cruises is recognized as an innovator in the luxury cruise line industry, providing large-ship amenities aboard intimate, all-suite vessels. Silversea offers guests an atmosphere of conviviality and casual elegance, with itineraries encompassing all seven continents.

Ship-wide wireless access is among the features available to guests, but Silversea's wireless network did not live up to the cruise line's reputation. Guests complained that in-suite connectivity was spotty at best — by far the company's most frequent technology-related complaint. Solving the problem quickly became a high priority for the new director of IT infrastructure, Jason Cohn.

"On my first day with the company, I went over to a new ship that had been inaugurated here in Fort Lauderdale. As I walked around the ship I was approached by several people about why the onboard wireless Internet service didn't work very well," he said. "I walked through a door that I thought was a hallway — it was the entrance to the Owner's Suite. A woman was sitting there in her bathrobe. She explained that the only way she could get a wireless signal inside the suite was to sit in the foyer with the door open. I knew right then I had inherited a problem."

Cohn learned the problem was not just with the new ship but the entire fleet: Guests couldn't connect to the network with their suite doors closed. Based upon a third-party recommendation, Cohn called upon Tennyson LaJeunesse, CTO of RedCell Technologies, to perform an assessment.

"I must admit that I was reluctant at first. I didn't want someone to simply try to sell me their solution," Cohn said. "Tennyson came in at a reasonable rate to do an assessment and help me understand my problem. We spent two and a half days on the Silver Spirit out in L.A. and by the end of that time Tennyson had pinpointed the flaw in our network design. He gave me a whitepaper describing, from an engineering perspective, the problem on that ship and every other ship.

"I've been won over as a true fan of RedCell. Tennyson solved the basic problem with wireless connectivity on cruise ships."

Problem Solved

Cohn presented RedCell's whitepaper to the company that had deployed the wireless network. They reluctantly acknowledged that the whitepaper was correct from an engineering perspective — and that their solution would never work very well if at all. Cohn then began working with RedCell to develop the right solution. It was an easy sell to management and the project moved forward quickly.

"Within 45 days from the date of the initial assessment, we had funded, purchased, received, crate-shipped to the vessel and deployed a new system on the Silver Wind, from specifications RedCell had designed," Cohn said.



Challenge:

- Guest complaints about poor in-suite wireless connectivity

Solution:

- Complete redesign and overhaul of the WLAN from an engineering perspective

Benefits:

- Revenue from Internet services double to \$3 million
- Complaints related to wireless fall to zero
- Innovative new services, including streaming to mobile devices, become possible

“The solution RedCell engineered has worked flawlessly, while generating double the revenue.”

— Jason Cohn,
Director of IT Infrastructure,
Silversea Cruises

The solution was revolutionary, a departure from traditional 802.11 wireless deployments onboard passenger cruise ships.

“It was completely different than anything I had seen in the cruise industry going back 10 years,” said Cohn. “It answered lingering questions that we’ve had in our minds for years and cast into doubt accepted industry practices. And it instantly was a huge success.”

Within six months Silversea and RedCell had completed wireless deployments on two ships and within 18 months they had completed the entire fleet of six ships. The implementation would have been even faster but three of the older vessels had to be completely re-cabled, which meant the implementation team had to wait for the ships to be in dry dock.

“The speed with which RedCell assessed, reengineered, ripped and replaced these wireless networks was simply phenomenal. And I could appreciate the way that RedCell solved the problem because it was based on logic, engineering and math,” Cohn said.

“Materials onboard ships have changed, and something simple and innocuous that you would never think of made a big impact. A couple of years ago, they stopped producing vented doors to the suites. New ships coming out of the shipyard have solid steel doors. You put wireless access points in the hallways and it works great when the door is open. When the door is closed, you have to go through steel.”

Obviously, RedCell didn’t make radio signals go through steel. The company determined how to make wireless networking work seamlessly on Silversea’s cruise ships by changing the design of the system.

Taking It to the Next Level

Cohn gauges the success of the wireless implementation on two factors: customer complaints and revenue. One went down and the other went up — dramatically.

“My phone immediately stopped ringing,” said Cohn. “When we completed the Wind, the volume of phone calls went from 50 a week to 40. After we completed the Wind and the Cloud, 50 calls turned into 30 calls. By the time we completed the last ship, calls related to the wireless network went to zero.

“Meanwhile, the revenue from Internet services doubled — from \$1.5 million to \$3 million — with nothing else changing. That’s a huge ROI.”

From Cohn’s perspective, wireless connectivity is only the beginning. The wireless networks engineered by RedCell have provided the foundation for a unique new service offering on Silversea ships.

“We’re getting ready to go into our next stage,” Cohn said. “We will be driving voice over wireless for management and hospitality services. And we are going to start delivering streaming media, including full-feature video, to mobile devices. We are the first cruise line to be certified by the Hollywood content providers to stream video over Wi-Fi, all because we have the wireless network RedCell designed.

“We went from barely utilizing something that wasn’t working well to having a really good foundation for new services. We’ve turned our attention toward how we can start driving new services off our wireless infrastructure.”

RedCell continues to be a trusted partner for Silversea. When a core member of Cohn’s infrastructure team fell ill, RedCell stepped in and provided engineering support during his yearlong absence. RedCell also provides objective, vendor-agnostic advice for Silversea’s technology initiatives.

“This is rare to find in a single partner,” said Cohn.

RedCell provides a level of wireless expertise that is truly unmatched. The company overcame a problem that bedevils the cruise industry and has positioned us well to deliver a unique service.

“The solution RedCell engineered has worked flawlessly, while generating double the revenue,” said Cohn. “I’ll preach RedCell to the mountaintops. They have done really important work for me over the last three years, and I owe them a measure of my success.”

ABOUT REDCELL TECHNOLOGIES

RedCell Technologies is a highly focused professional services firm specializing in the integration of enterprise mobility solutions. The company offers a broad portfolio of services based upon an unparalleled combination of experience and extensive research data on the

industry’s most effective solutions for mobility. The ability to analyze and interpret each business’ unique needs and deliver cost-effective and efficient technology solutions to meet those needs makes RedCell Technologies the clear choice for enterprise mobility.