



Manchester's MEN Arena: Europe's Biggest Indoor Arena enjoys Gigabit download speeds and over 20,000 simultaneous users with Extricom WLAN deployment

Ticket holders and performers are now able to access a seamless high speed Wi-Fi network using Extricom's unique Channel Blanket™ technology across all public areas plus the back stage and loading areas of the Manchester Evening News Arena.

The 20,000 seat arena is Europe's largest indoor concert arena and the flagship of SMG Europe, the largest operator of indoor entertainment arenas in the UK, with venues across Europe, controlling over 75,000 seats in ten operational facilities.

In the first decade of the new millennium the MEN Arena sold more tickets than any other venue in the UK and has hosted world class artists – including this year's star-studded Children in Need Rocks concert, sporting events and stand-up comedy.



Industry Demands/Challenges

Developments in Internet technology have revolutionised the entertainment industry. For any venue, there are now numerous stakeholders needing access to the Internet simultaneously. Touring shows are increasingly reliant on the Internet to download graphics and video before performances, whilst audiences and journalists alike now expect to be able to access the Internet via mobile and hand-held devices.

For an arena as large as the MEN, with multiple floors, concrete walls and an audience capacity of up to 21,000, installing and enabling a network to meet these diverse needs presented significant challenges.

Working with Extricom Partner On-Communications and the MEN arena staff, it was quickly identified that the key technical requirements for the venue were:

- Seamless mobility
- Blanket rather than cell-based Wi-Fi architecture
- The ability to handle very large numbers of simultaneous Wi-Fi mobile device users.

Steve Merrick, On-Communications' Technical Director explained: *'It quickly became clear that only one manufacturer was able to meet all of the technical requirements of the project. Extricom was the only system that offered guaranteed, seamless mobility without co-channel interference or holes in the coverage.'*

Extricom's channel blanket architecture delivers a continuous service to very high numbers of simultaneous users with no loss of bandwidth or throughput.

'We are delighted our new network is lit up and in use. Touring events and productions can now enjoy seamless Wi-Fi access throughout the whole of their working area as part of our ongoing commitment to maintain the MEN Arena as one of the premier entertainment venues in the world.'

James Allen
Assistant GM & Events
Director - MEN Arena



Project Scope

As part of a state of the art network infrastructure for Europe's biggest Indoor Arena, deploy Extricom WLAN to provide seamless mobility, gigabit download speeds and improve the operational and fan experience

Solution

6 x EXSW1600 Switches

64 x EXRP30n Access Points

30 EXRE PoE Range Extenders

Results

Seamless mobility for WiFi enabled mobile devices

Gigabit download speeds for in-house WiFi content

Over 20,000 simultaneous users

Improved artist and fan experience

The Extricom service guarantee, along with the minimal ongoing maintenance the solution requires made it the natural choice for us'.

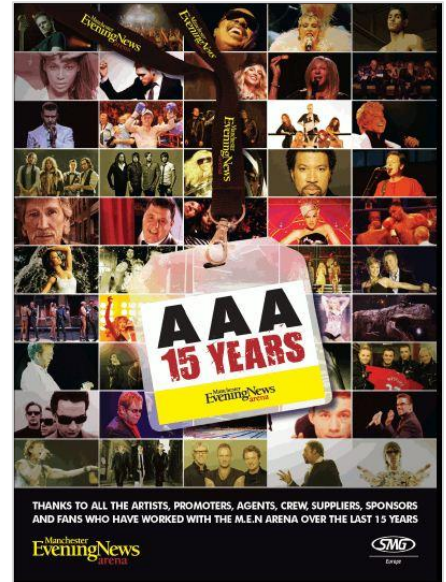
Bespoke Deployment

Working with Extricom, On-Communications designed and installed a bespoke system and network infrastructure for the arena that included 6 x EXSW1600 Switches, 64 EXRP30n Access Points and 30 of Extricom's unique EXRE PoE Range Extenders. The network is now capable of delivering high capacity wired and wireless Internet access as well as powerful multi-media LAN services for mobile devices inside the arena.

The Wi-Fi network can be accessed at every level of the MEN Arena bowl, around the concourses, throughout the executive suites, back stage, the dressing rooms and loading bay areas and offers Gigabit download capability, transforming the ability for in-house mobile and wireless applications.

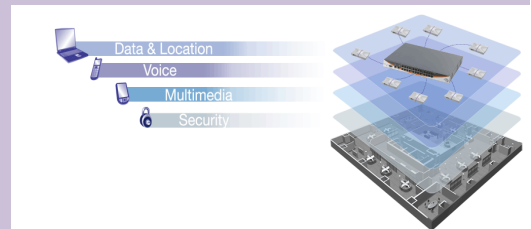
James Allen, Assistant General Manager and Events Director at the MEN Arena, said *'We are delighted our new network is lit up and in use. Touring events and productions can now enjoy seamless WiFi access throughout the whole of their working area as part of our ongoing commitment to maintain the MEN Arena as one of the premier entertainment venues in the world'.*

Users of the Arena began to benefit from the new network immediately, with one of the first events being the WNBA's inaugural European Tour. Andrew Matthews, Director of Technology, Sport Event Solutions Ltd for the WNBA Live Manchester 2011, said *'It was a great benefit to our event operations to have a fast and consistent Wi-Fi service throughout the back of house and marshalling yard areas; it's so much easier than trying to implement something ourselves'.*



The Channel Blanket Difference

At the heart of the Extricom solution is a simple yet powerful idea: eliminate the concept of cell-planning, and replace it with Channel Blanket™ architecture. In the Channel Blanket, each Wi-Fi radio channel is used on every access point to create continuous "blankets" of coverage. The sophisticated Extricom WLAN Switch tightly controls a set of multi-radio 802.11 a/b/g/n UltraThin™ Access Points (APs), to deliver a series of industry firsts.



What distinguishes Extricom from all other WLAN solutions on the market is its ability to enable multiple blankets from the same infrastructure. The system is therefore unique in combining multi-channel capacity with channel blanket mobility and robustness. This makes an Extricom WLAN the most operationally flexible system in the market, and has profound implications for the All Wireless Enterprise.

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