

Telluride Bluegrass Festival A Firetide™ Wireless Mesh Network Rocks the Bluegrass World

Organization

Telluride Bluegrass Festival

Industry

Entertainment

More Information

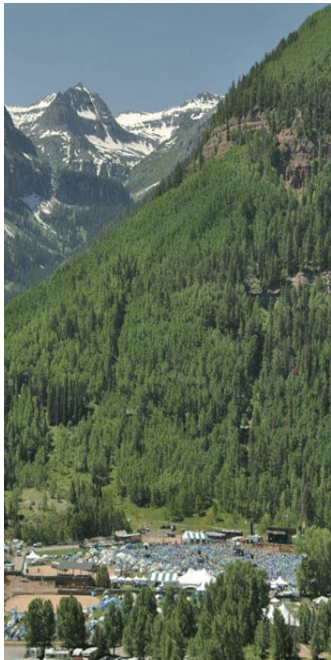
www.abeocorp.com and www.bluegrass.com

Challenge

Create a secure, temporary broadband network that enables performers, fans, and staff to access data, voice, and video at the festival site.

Solution

Firetide 3203 HotPort™ Outdoor Wireless Mesh Nodes



High in the Colorado Rockies, more than 10,000 “festivarians” gather each summer for the world-renowned Telluride Bluegrass Festival. For four days they immerse themselves in bluegrass and related music genres, as well as enjoy associated festival events, dining, and shopping in the town’s Victorian-era National Historic Landmark District. And thanks to a portable Firetide HotPort™ high performance mesh network, in 2005, festivarians were able to wirelessly connect to the Internet for the first time.

Telluride is nestled in magnificent alpine beauty at the base of the Telluride Ski Mountain, surrounded by the 13,000-foot peaks of the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Among numerous art, music, and film events on Telluride’s rich cultural calendar is the Telluride Bluegrass Festival and its many world-class performances. In 2005, the festival highlighted artists including Alison Krauss and Union Station, Earl Scruggs, Stanley Clarke, Bela Fleck, Jean-Luc Ponty, Jewel, Bobby McFerrin, Wilco and many others.

While there is plenty to see and do during the four-day festival, performers and attendees also want to be able to stay connected to family and offices. However, Telluride is a small town with limited connectivity options because of its remote location. The Telluride Bluegrass Festival organizers wanted to provide free Internet access to attendees and concessionaires, while using the same broadband network for administrative, and security purposes. Organizers investigated providing conventional wireless access to festivarians, but the challenge and cost of deploying the wired-backbone for the Wi-Fi access points was too great—especially for an event that lasts only four days. After turning to ABEO Corporation, a national provider of information technology, wireless, and engineering solutions, they found their solution.

Go Wireless, Temporarily

ABEO is experienced with building wireless networks in challenging environments and the company’s expertise in quickly setting up temporary and flexible wireless networks was a key factor for the festival’s organizers. Bill Woods, Director of Sales and Marketing for ABEO’s central region, welcomed the challenge in Telluride.

“The festival location encompassed the equivalent of several football fields, and within the grounds were numerous areas to be connected,” he explained. “And like any outdoor event, weather is always a consideration. The Bluegrass Festival is notorious for having at least one day of rain, so the network had to be able to work in wet and possibly severe weather.”

Woods and ABEO had to meet all of these requirements and remove the network within 24 hours of the final act. Not to worry—they were set to deploy ABEO’s AgileAIR™ integrated mesh networking solution, based on wireless mesh network solutions from Firetide.

HotPorts for High-speed Access

The festival network required only one broadband Internet connection, provided by Qwest, which terminated on an Internet gateway device in the festival’s box office trailer. Connected to the gateway was a Firetide HotPort™ 3203 outdoor wireless mesh node and ValuePoint access point. Approximately 14 additional HotPort 3203 outdoor wireless mesh nodes, each with an access point, were stationed throughout the grounds,

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providing coverage for all of the seating areas, backstage, artists' area and dressing rooms, press area, sponsors' displays, concessions, the medical tent, and food services.

Up Fast and Looking Good

Although the organizers wanted extensive wireless access, they did not want to defile the festival's pristine settings by digging trenches for cables or stringing unsightly backbone cabling overhead. The ABEO team not only eliminated these concerns but also the cost associated with installing cable. They were able to deploy the network in only 48 hours and remove it after the event in half that time.

As the Festival is renowned for its "show must go on" approach, so must the network. Firetide wireless mesh networks are also self-healing. In the unlikely event that a node goes down, the network automatically re-routes traffic around the failure so that festivalgoers never miss a beat.



ABEO used Firetide HotView™ Mesh Management Software to monitor the network in real time and to ensure proper configuration of each node upon deployment. The HotView graphical user interface provides complete control over all mesh and individual node settings, including security provisions. HotView also offers customizable mesh maps, practical diagnostic/test tools, fault and performance statistics, and the ability to upgrade mesh node software.

Ethernet Ports for Added Capabilities

Each HotPort wireless mesh node also includes a built-in, dual-port 10/100 Ethernet switch that supports 802.3af Power over Ethernet (PoE). This enabled the festival to connect standard Ethernet devices, such as printers, security cameras, voice gateways, as well as Wi-Fi access points to the wireless backbone. While security has never been an issue for the festival, having

cameras deployed throughout the grounds for real-time video monitoring assured event organizers that if an attendee needed assistance, he or she could be quickly located.

Festival administrators also used the ABEO AgileAIR network to accommodate voice over IP (VoIP) telephones for administrative and operations staff, enabling everyone to stay in touch anywhere across the festival grounds.

A Higher Level of Participation

"We encouraged festivalgoers to bring their wireless-enabled laptops and PDAs so that they could share the fun and immediacy of the festival through email, instant messaging, and photos with their friends and relatives worldwide," said Craig Ferguson, chairman of the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. "We believe this will help the Telluride festival continue to grow in popularity."

There was no requirement for festival attendees to register to use the network. A special Web site was available to all users, which allowed them to check updated performance and workshop schedules, obtain weather forecasts, and link to their favorite performing artists' websites. Users also had the benefit of a regular broadband connection for surfing the Web, buying festival merchandise, sending e-mail and digital photos, and instant messaging—all from the comfort of their picnic blankets or anywhere on the festival grounds.

Same Place Next Year?

Out of all of the hits played by Festival performers, perhaps the newest one enjoyed by festivalgoers was the ABEO and Firetide network. "Temporary networks like this one are exceedingly flexible and adaptable," remarked Woods. "They are perfect for providing a stand-alone network at special events or as an adjunct to existing, wired networks. There was no charge to Telluride Bluegrass Festival users, but that doesn't mean there isn't the potential for delivering revenue-generating services over these networks as well."

That could mean that a Firetide high-performance wireless mesh network may soon be coming to a town (or festival) near you.

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