



Maplin

Maplin Electronics is the UK's largest specialist retailer of consumer electronics. Founded in 1972 by two technology enthusiasts frustrated by the lack of good quality electronic components on the market, Maplin now has more than 200 stores across the UK & Ireland with over 15,000 different products.

Maplin has a turnover in excess of £200M and it is in no small part due to their superior customer service. Over 2,000 customer service staff help thousands of customers across hundreds of stores make informed choices about their technology purchases every day.

"We're all about sensational service, so we wanted a way in which our store colleagues could maximise the time they spent on the shop floor helping customers and spend less time on tasks that took them away from the shop floor," said Mark Smith, IT Director at Maplin Electronics.

Smith and his team identified that team members would be able to spend more time on the shop floor if they replaced their legacy wired hand held terminals, used for stock and price checking, with wireless ones. "We wanted a separate secure wireless network in all the stores to support the wireless hand held terminals and we also wanted one that we could centrally control," said Smith.

Smith first heard about Cisco Meraki from an online tech blog and went on to attend one of Cisco Meraki's webinars on cloud networking.

"The webinar was very compelling and key for us was that it demonstrated how we could manage the wireless network at our hundreds of stores remotely," explained Smith. Cisco Meraki APs make a TLS connection to the cloud, and can then be managed from a web-based dashboard, integrated with Google Maps.

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– Mark Smith, IT Director, Maplin

For attending the webinar Smith received a free cloud managed AP and trialled it at one store. "The trial was fantastic. From the dashboard we could configure everything we needed to and then as soon as the AP was plugged in, it just worked! And without the need for an onsite controller," said Smith. Smith and his team were particularly excited with how the cloud architecture could scale to Maplin stores across the country. "We don't

have a fleet of network engineers on hand for configuring or troubleshooting, so the capability to centrally manage the wireless and with such simplicity is what won us over."

Maplin Electronics rolled out approximately 400 APs across 206 stores in the UK & Ireland in an incredible 6 weeks. "Installation was very straightforward. We configured the dashboard ourselves and worked with a technology partner to physically install the APs at each store," said Smith.

Maplin have their wireless network set up with one hidden SSID that the wireless hand held terminals authenticate to using a pre-shared key with WPA2 encryption. "There are 5 people in the team with access to the dashboard, but the reality is we don't need to manage the wireless network. We just let it run and look at it once a week," said Smith. Moreover, the APs are uniquely configured so that a wireless handheld terminal will function only in the store it was intended for.

In the next three years, Maplin Electronics plans to open 100 more stores. "As we open more and more stores, I'm happy in the knowledge that the wireless will be the last thing I need to worry about getting up and running," said Smith. "It's a simple case of registering some more APs on our dashboard and plugging them in!"

Maplin Electronics now have many opportunities to innovate based on their Cisco Meraki APs, without the need to add more hardware or cost. "We've achieved what we set out to with Cisco Meraki but we've not even scratched the surface of their full capability yet," said Smith. "With a robust WiFi solution in store, we're going to look to move more tasks to the sales floor using technology."