



United Colors of Benetton

Wireless for employees and shoppers at Benetton UK's flagship stores

- Single IT administrator quickly deploys plug-and-play access points at Benetton's London headquarters and flagship stores.
- Centralised web-based dashboard provides easy management and comprehensive summary reports for all locations.
- Multiple SSIDs and stateful AP firewall allow for secure employee access alongside public access.
- Splash pages create new opportunities for marketing and social media.

Mark Bishop is a busy guy. He's the IT Manager for Bencom Retail, which operates the flagship stores of United Colors of Benetton in the UK. As the only IT administrator on staff, he spends most of his time traveling between Benetton stores in London and solving retail IT problems—repairing point of sale terminals, maintaining electronic equipment for stocktaking, resetting malfunctioning security cameras, and fixing phone systems.

Still, he wanted to offer WiFi for shoppers and secure internal wireless network access for employees at Benetton UK's retail stores. "The public access is of interest to us because we're targeting the mobile market," Bishop said. "We're trying to go down the road of push marketing to mobile phones and next generation devices."

Several stores had routers with wireless capabilities, but Bishop found the wireless too difficult to manage. He also considered deploying consumer-grade access points, but he felt apprehensive about the lack of security. When Activator UK, Bencom's managed service provider, recommended Meraki's wireless solution with advanced management and security features, Bishop immediately wanted to try it.

"He really liked the ease of deployment and the cloud management aspect of the Meraki solution," said Ian Hanson, Business Development Manager at Activator UK. "And the security features embedded in Meraki allow for secure internal access at the same time as public access, in a way that's much easier to manage than other solutions."

After testing a few Meraki MR14 dual-radio 802.11n access points (APs), Bishop deployed Meraki across the London flagship stores on Regent Street and in Knightsbridge, as well as at Bencom headquarters and the store on Oxford Street. He installed the units himself.

"It couldn't have been any easier," Bishop said. "That's one reason Meraki was quite appealing to us. I just plugged it in and it looks after itself. It's so much less management on our hands, but we still get the security features and the reporting."

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–Mark Bishop, IT Manager, Benetton UK

With one click in the Meraki dashboard, Bishop created separate SSIDs for the private and public networks. The internal network is WPA-secured, so managers with laptops at their stores or franchise owners visiting headquarters are whitelisted and then can connect to the corporate network easily and securely. Meraki's stateful firewall, included in each access point, automatically keeps the traffic separate and blocks shoppers from accessing the LAN.

The open public network directs users to a Benetton splash page and then on to a Twitter page, and Bishop is working with his public relations team to evaluate other marketing opportunities.

"We want to see the uptake, how many connections we get and with which types of mobile devices," he said. "With the Meraki dashboard we can see very clearly what types of devices are connecting.

The next step is to send users on to our Facebook page or to a promotions or vouchers page. We're looking to use this technology as another avenue to provide special offers and attract attention." In the meantime Bishop admits that managing the wireless is not his top priority. That's where features like Meraki's AutoRF – automatic

performance tuning – and summary reports have been invaluable.

"I haven't had a lot of time to dedicate to perfecting it," he said. "So far I just have a look at the monthly reports. They make it easy to get the information we need at a glance.

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Bishop praised the centralized management from Meraki's cloud platform. "What I like about Meraki is the ease of configuration and distribution," Bishop said. "I think the dashboard is fantastic, including its analytics and its use of Google maps. I can make all the changes in the dashboard and the settings automatically populate through our estate."