



Executive Summary

Industry

- Professional Services

Environment

- 7 offices
- 650 staff

Technology Needs

- Guest access needed to be separate and secured
- Increased capacity due to the growth of devices on the network
- The Wi-Fi network needed to be manageable and consistent between Clarke Willmott's seven UK offices

Extreme Solution Components

- ExtremeWireless[™]

Results

- Secure Wi-Fi can be easily managed from a centralized cloud platform
- Guests can be segmented differently on the network, assigned specific policies, and are able to access the sites and documents they need, using the applications they need to work efficiently
- Cutting out coverage dead zones and enabled more agile collaborative ways of working



Clarke Willmott Simplifies and Secures Their Network and Gains Valuable Insights

Clarke Willmott is a national law firm with seven offices around the UK. Known for its genuine client relationships and detailed industry knowledge, the firm has seen significant growth over recent years, employing over 650 staff. Clarke Willmott offers expert advice and support on a broad range of legal services to individuals and businesses, with a focus on the most involved and complex matters. This encompasses a variety of sectors, from Agriculture, Education and Public Sector through to Banking, Nuclear Energy and Technology.

The Challenge

The challenges facing Clarke Willmott LLP and its wireless infrastructure were split into a few key areas, namely meeting the high standards required of a respected law firm and ensuring that a system meeting these requirements was easy to manage.

Security was a central concern, due to the confidential nature of the work which Clarke Willmott carries out. This meant ensuring that all network traffic was secured, easily segregated and managed from a centralized point.

It was vitally important that clients visiting Clarke Willmott's offices be able to gain access to guest wireless internet, in a simple and professional manner. However, this guest traffic needed to be kept secure and segregated to ensure the highest security standards. Network administrators needed to be able to set clear policies for different user profiles.

As the nature of the firm's requirements changed, the existing system was beginning to show its age. The firm's staff had gradually shifted to working in a different way, becoming more agile. In particular, this meant migrating away from fixed PCs at a stationary desk, and onto laptops which needed the ability to access the network from anywhere, even outside of the office. The old system had been designed to provide Wi-Fi into communal areas such as meeting rooms, and not the office space, leading to areas in the office of poor connectivity.

The number of devices being brought onto the network was also putting greater levels of strain on network capacity, causing concern that network slowdown would start to impact productivity. Additionally, the variety of software and apps being used by employees had increased. Connections between devices and parts of the network could not be tracked, increasing the firm's vulnerability to an insider threat or hack.

Compounding this problem was the issue that management of the network as a whole had become difficult. The old system was prone to periods of unplanned downtime and inconsistency. Clarke Willmott uses Citrix as a desktop delivery mechanism, so an always-on connection was essential to the core functions of its offices.

Finally, the Wi-Fi network needed to be manageable and consistent between Clarke Willmott's seven UK offices, allowing network managers clear insight into the performance of the entire network. Employees expected to log in easily no matter which office they were based in each week. Full visibility and insight were also essential for the firm to demonstrate its compliance with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Any breach or failure to follow the newly introduced legislation could cause great reputational damage.

"Our clients expect a high standard of professionalism and customer service at all times, and that extends to their experience of internet access on-site too. We needed to introduce a Wi-Fi system that made that as easy as possible while giving us the tools to ensure the highest standards of network security."

Jon Whiteman, IT Infrastructure and Applications Manager, Clarke Willmott

The Solution

Extreme's deployment partner Appurity began the initial work by making a proposal to Clarke Willmott LLP, which promised a swift and simple deployment. "We knew that minimizing disruption and ensuring there was no downtime was an essential part of the proposal, and we were confident we could do it without much cost to the firm," commented Steve Whiter, Director, Appurity.

After undertaking site surveys and building up a detailed plan of the hardware requirements of the offices, the first step of the deployment was a proof of concept, with 10 AP250 access points installed in one of the offices. This was soon expanded to over 30 access points across all seven offices. Once the planning, configuration, initial policies and SSIDs were set up, deployment partner Appurity was able to complete the integration and rollout in a short period of time, keeping office disruption to a minimum and ensuring a clean handover to the new system.

The quality of Extreme's devices ensures consistent coverage in the building and fewer APs required for the same number of devices. This creates a better user experience for Clarke Willmott's staff as they take their laptops to different parts of the building to work.

"After a trial of the technology, and learning more about Extreme's full networking offering, Clarke Willmott LLP chose Extreme because of the insight it gave us into the network, the ease of deployment, and its compatibility with every part of our network," said Whiteman.

The introduction of a VPN Gateway Virtual Appliance (VGVA) simplified remote access and network routing. This opened up previously inaccessible parts of the network to remote workers, ensuring that employees could remain connected wherever they decided to work from.

The Results

With the new network in place, Clarke Willmott LLP enjoys persistent, secure Wi-Fi which is easily managed from a centralized cloud platform. Guests can be segmented differently on the network, assigned specific policies, and are able to access the sites and documents they need, using the applications they need to work efficiently.

Security is greatly improved, highlighting Clarke Willmott's commitment to high standards of confidentiality and compliance. WPA2 enterprise-grade Wi-Fi security ensures the encryption of all data being exchanged on the network, whether guest or corporate traffic. Guest traffic is now easily segmented, with visitors to any of the Clarke Willmott offices able to easily gain network access through a captive portal.

Reflecting Appurty's specialism in mobile application integrations with Wi-Fi, key pieces of software used by Clarke Willmott, such as Blackberry UEM and iManage, were integrated and compatible with the deployed Extreme solution.

Management and maintenance of the system has also been simplified and strengthened. In contrast to the previous issues with downtime and inflexibility, the new system is easy to manage, always on, and provides insight into the health of the network across all offices.

Supporting the evolution in the ways employees work, the new access points provided stronger Wi-Fi signal in every part of the office, cutting out coverage dead zones and enabling more agile collaborative ways of working.

All of this made for enthusiastic feedback within the business from staff and senior management alike. "It's been great discussing the ease of deployment and the results internally," commented Jon Whiteman. "Senior management wants the IT in the business to be consistent and reliable, so we know what we are going to get every time and find it easy to maintain. That's exactly what we got."

"Since we started working with Extreme, we have seen a marked improvement in network stability and the system is considerably easier to manage. In short, it's a simple to use system which enhances our professional reputation among our clients."

Jon Whiteman, IT Infrastructure and Applications Manager

Future Outlook

The deployment has been a great success so far, supporting the firm's development and laying the foundations for future projects. Clarke Willmott plans to rollout Extreme's innovative cloud-managed networking platform, ExtremeCloud IQ, to continue to reduce operational complexity, further improve business agility and gain valuable insights through AI and machine learning capabilities. This puts the firm in a position of confidence for the future. Whether Clarke Willmott opens a new office or sees even greater numbers of devices connecting to the network in the future, the infrastructure is in place to support this expansion