Wi-Fi network upgrades at CKC Drenthe

Fast and reliable Wi-Fi at all 32 Drenthe sites

The CKC Drenthe provides primary education and childcare at 31 children's centers in the province of Drenthe in the Netherlands. The foundation's main office is in Assen, where the director and support staff work. A fast, reliable and secure Wi-Fi network at all 32 locations is essential for a good education today. After a free Wi-Fi health check it was apparent that the equipment had to be replaced, and the decision was made to upgrade the existing infrastructure with routers and access points from LANCOM Systems.

Digitalization

Digitalization in education has caused an explosive increase in the load on Wi-Fi networks in schools. For example, every child from grade 3 onwards at the CKC Drenthe receives an iPad or Chromebook for use in lessons. Across all sites, approximately 5,500 pupils and 900 employees connect to the network every day. "We can't live without Wi-Fi these days," explains Remco Luitjens, ICT staff member at the CKC Drenthe. "From financial and educational software to the administration of absenteeism and payrolls, everything is done digitally. We have become highly dependent on web-based software, so a stable Internet connection is essential."

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The CKC Drenthe foundation was established at the end of 2017 as a merger of two administrative umbrella organizations: COG Drenthe in Assen and surroundings, and CONOD in Noord-Oost Drenthe. The two organizations used their own Wi-Fi networks and over time a number of sites were expanded or refurbished. When network specialist Whyless conducted a free Wi-Fi health check in early 2022, it quickly became clear that the entire infrastructure was in need of renewal. "We wanted to move to a single supplier and standardize the situation for all locations," says Luitjens.

Phased rollout

During the survey, Ferran Menning, owner of Whyless, discovered that the CKC Drenthe network was 'flat'. "Basically, everything was accessing the Internet via a single connection. This was not only a security issue, but also unreliable." After understanding the problems, a phased rollout with network equipment from LANCOM Systems was opted for. A Wi-Fi design was created for each location and, after the pilot, everyone was convinced. The third phase is now underway with additional LANCOM access points being installed to further improve coverage. "We are already satisfied, but we expect things to get even better," says Luitjens.

The new situation pleases not only Luitjens, but also his colleagues: "Yes, they were very enthusiastic. The number of devices increased until the network simply couldn't cope any longer. Sometimes students were unable to access the Internet and even had to sit in a different part of the building to take classes. The situation has improved simply by replacing the old equipment. Now teachers no longer have to walk through the building to help children with questions."

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Lightning strike

The CKC Drenthe network is managed by Whyless, with the LANCOM Management Cloud (LMC) as a central asset. This hyper-integrated cloud solution uses advanced Software Defined Networking (SDN) technologies. Networks can be set up, monitored and managed automatically and efficiently. Whyless can perform updates and security patches remotely. But the company also sees when a malfunction or problem occurs and can take action immediately.

An extreme example of this was a lightning strike at the CKC some time ago. "All our systems and equipment were knocked out, and we couldn't operate at all," Luitjens explains. In such cases, the LMC sends notifications about a partial or complete failure. "We jumped into a car straight away and could resolve the situation immediately," says Menning.

Reliable and secure

Like other school institutions, the CKC Drenthe values reliability, quality and privacy. The sensitive data of thousands of children is processed on the network every day, and it would be disastrous if this were to fall into the wrong hands. For Luitjens, it is important that LANCOM is a European supplier: "Because you know that they comply with important European legislation, such as the GDPR." LANCOM guarantees that its products are free of backdoors and comply with European privacy regulations.

Menning has cooperated with LANCOM since 2006, and Whyless was actually LANCOM's first MSP partner in the Netherlands. "Unlike large international players, where you usually get the most basic partner contract, LANCOM gave us the feeling of being taken seriously. Moreover, the products are really very good and the cloud environment is ideal. What particularly stands out are the personal contact, the fast delivery times, and the aspect of security."

LANCOM are happy too. "The increasing digitalization means that schools can no longer do without a high-performance and stable network. That is why we are proud that CKC Drenthe now has a future-proof infrastructure. This project is also a further example of the long-term successful collaboration we have with Whyless. We are already looking forward to our next joint job," says Ajin Ku, Country Manager Benelux at LANCOM Systems.

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At a glance

The customer

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Products and services:
Provider of primary
education and childcare

The partner

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Requirements

→ Fast and reliable Wi-Fi net-
  work that is easy to manage

Components deployed:
→ Routers
  LANCOM 1900EF
→ Access points
  LANCOM LX-6200
→ Network management
  LANCOM Management Cloud
  (LMC)

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