RUCKUS®
COMMSCOPE

GROUP 1 AUTOMOTIVE
Fortune 300 auto retailer outperforms competitors with RUCKUS Wi-Fi

Group 1 Automotive is a Fortune 300 company. The company owns about 300 dealerships and collision centers in the U.S., U.K. and Brazil. During the 2008 recession, the company took decisive steps to cut costs and improve efficiency. One of those steps was replacing its unreliable and limited Wi-Fi with RUCKUS®. Over time, efficiency measures have been augmented by new services enabled by RUCKUS Wi-Fi. It has enabled the company to start sharing best practices across dealerships. It has also provided the transparency and granular controls necessary to support new data collection requirements from auto manufacturers in the era of IoT.

GROUP 1 AUTOMOTIVE®

Customer
Group 1 Automotive

Location
U.S., U.K. and Brazil

Challenges

- The existing Wi-Fi was costly, unreliable and difficult to manage

- The constant problems limited Wi-Fi use in supporting front and back office operations

- Without a common platform, the global retailer was unable to share best practices

Solution

- Over 800 indoor APs
- Cloudpath® Enrollment System
- SmartZone Controller

Benefits

- RUCKUS Wi-Fi cut costs, improved reliability, and simplified management

- The company is deploying Wi-Fi in showrooms, service and parts departments, and newly acquired dealerships

- RUCKUS provides the foundation for creating and sharing best practices across dealerships

- Cloudpath securely onboards employees and devices and collects useful demographics about visitors through the guest Wi-Fi

- More granular control enables the company to meet evolving data collection requirements from automakers

High cost, low performance Wi-Fi is a bad deal for a growing auto retailer

In 2008, the global recession some called "The Great Auto Crisis" forced many car dealerships into bankruptcy. Group 1 Automotive, an auto retailer headquartered in Houston, Texas, had dealerships across the U.S. The company took swift measures to reduce costs. "Our mandate was to find ways for dealerships to operate more efficiently,"

> "Not only was the RUCKUS technology better than anything we'd heard about from our peers, but the price was much lower than other vendors—and certainly compared to our old Wi-Fi. The RUCKUS management system gives us granular control that we've never had before."
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> **Jarrod Murphy**
> **IT Manager**
> **Group 1 Automotive**

says Andrew Giancola. His primary job is Director of Information Security, but he's also responsible for Wi-Fi networks across the organization. "Cisco was our Wi-Fi vendor, and their equipment, licensing and maintenance costs were high and kept escalating."

Jarrod Murphy is an IT manager who works with the west coast dealerships. "Our Wi-Fi wasn't just expensive, it was also our least reliable service. We had constant problems with coverage and channel conflicts, especially in high-density metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, California. It was difficult to diagnose—much less resolve—the issues with the Cisco APs and controllers."

Interference was another problem that caused a lot of frustration. The parts department used small handheld scanners. "The scanners couldn't reliably connect to the Cisco APs. Employees would have to physically move boxes to try to get a better signal. It wasted a lot of time in a department that's constantly busy."

The service recommendation was clear: it was time to scrap the old Wi-Fi.

Airbaud, a Service Provider based out of Indiana enthusiastically recommended RUCKUS. The more Giancola and Murphy investigated RUCKUS, the more impressed they were. "Not only was the RUCKUS technology better than anything we'd heard about from other dealerships, but it required less maintenance, fewer APs and a significant reduction in cost compared to the other vendors." says Murphy. "The RUCKUS management system gives us granular control that we've never had before.

Giancola agrees. "I'm a security specialist and RUCKUS was so easy to use that it didn't take long before my team was tackling some pretty sophisticated configurations, optimization and diagnostics."

They chose RUCKUS to solve existing problems. Over time, they discovered that they had capabilities that would leave their competition in the dust.

RUCKUS Wi-Fi flexibility keeps pace with accelerated acquisitions

Group 1 continued expanding its operations, acquiring dealerships in the U.K. and Brazil and adding new dealerships across the U.S. Today, the company owns about 300 dealerships and collision centers.

Acquisitions present technical challenges, especially for networks. It isn't always feasible to rewire buildings, especially if you don't own them. "Setting up new WLANs is easy and affordable with RUCKUS," says Giancola. "It's given us the foundation for instituting best practices across all of our dealerships, which we couldn't even imagine before."

In service departments, many dealerships were using Shortel Communications. Technicians had to use their own cellular service when going over a vehicle checklist—recording mileage, taking pictures of any vehicle damage, and so on. The minutes were deducted from a technician's data plan. Not surprisingly, this was highly

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**Andrew Giancola
Director of Information Security
Group 1 Automotive**
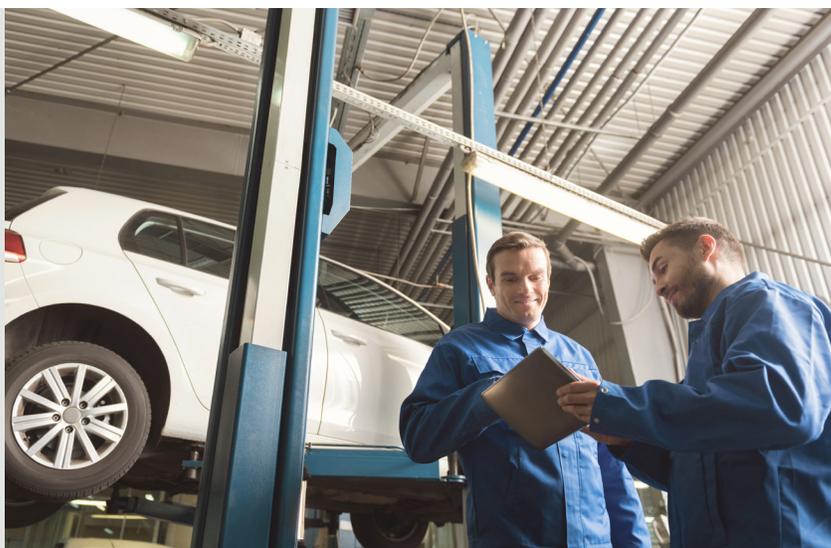
unpopular with service technicians. One of the first initiatives has been deploying RUCKUS WLANs in the service departments.

Another new initiative is deploying Wi-Fi in showrooms to offer free guest Wi-Fi. Before visitors sign onto the guest Wi-Fi, the dealership collects a name and email. Recently, they brought in RUCKUS Cloudpath Enrollment System, which enables them to collect additional demographic information. "Many people do comparison shopping online now and then visit a dealership. We want to understand as much as we can about our visitors and these new buying patterns. RUCKUS has built-in analytics, and we're planning to merge that information with third-party data to build up more complete profiles," says Giancola.

Cloudpath software also increases security for employees and their devices, with a variety of powerful safeguards to secure every connection. They're using Cloudpath to onboard employees and all

of their mobile devices. "With Cloudpath software in place, we can support BYOD, which our employees appreciate. We now have visibility over devices and users on the network that we didn't have before," says Giancola.

Cloudpath is integrated with Active Directory, so each employee has a single login credential. The company can onboard employees faster with the appropriate privileges and revoke network privileges immediately if an employee leaves the company. "This is a highly competitive business, so having this control closes a big security gap," says Giancola.

Before the company deployed Cloudpath Enrollment System, SSID proliferation was a problem. Now they can also limit the number of SSIDs. "Before deploying RUCKUS Wi-Fi and Cloudpath Enrollment System, we had to set up too many SSIDs to isolate traffic. That created needless complexity, which can make it more difficult to administer security policies," says Giancola. "With RUCKUS Cloudpath Enrollment System, we've reduced the number of SSIDs and strengthened

security management."

Interference is no longer a problem in high-density cities or storage depots with metal shelves everywhere. "We used to get an unending stream of complaints about connection problems and dropped signals. Now it's rare that we get a complaint," says Murphy. "RUCKUS just works, which allows us to focus on growth rather than fixing problems."

Other dealers struggle with proprietary, perplexing manufacturer demands

Giancola says Group 1 Automotive is especially well positioned to adapt to the demands of smart transportation and the Internet of Things (IoT). Group 1 has dealerships representing at least 30 different manufacturers. "We want to standardize as much as possible; it would be counter-productive to put in different WLANs to support different brands," says Giancola. "RUCKUS gives us a common foundation that's adaptable to each manufacturer's demands."

Manufacturers continue to install more sensors on cars and trucks to improve safety and collect information (everything from diagnostic data to country codes). Giancola says the dealership community is a small one, so everyone knows what the competition is doing. He relates the story of one competitor who spent tens of thousands of dollars ripping out its WLAN network and replacing it with the wireless vendor that an automaker mandated. Despite the cost and disruption, the new APs still couldn't pick up the new sensor data that the manufacturer wanted. "Our dealership for the same auto brand quietly stayed with RUCKUS. We were able to figure out how to get the APs to pick up the requested data," says Giancola. "That's when we knew that the ability to 'get under the hood' with RUCKUS was going to be key to serving the unique needs of each auto manufacturer and still allow us to standardize across Group 1." Perhaps the toughest challenge came out of a partnership between a Japanese manufacturer working in partnership with an American manufacturer of high-end electric cars. "The two companies wanted our service department to collect data transmitted between the two cars. Our service technicians tried repeatedly, but the Wi-Fi couldn't pick up the data. Both manufacturers said our technicians were at fault. But we got into the RUCKUS APs and used a packet analyzer. We were able to isolate the communication stream and prove that the electric car wasn't transmitting its data. That ended the finger pointing. When I say that RUCKUS gives you visibility and granular control without complexity, I can give you example after example," says Giancola.

Watching the competition struggle with the evolving requirements of IoT and consumer buying habits in the era of online shopping, Giancola is confident that his company won't be outperformed. "We're a Fortune 300 company, and it's gratifying how many of my peers contact me to find out how we're using RUCKUS. It tells me that I'm doing my part to contribute to the leadership position of Group 1 Automotive."

About RUCKUS Networks

RUCKUS Networks builds and delivers purpose-driven networks that perform in the demanding environments of the industries we serve. Together with our network of trusted go-to-market partners, we empower our customers to deliver exceptional experiences to the guests, students, residents, citizens and employees who count on them.

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