

SARATOGA RACE COURSE

Monetization of Ruckus Wi-Fi is off to the Races at Saratoga



CASE STUDY



**Saratoga
RaceTrack**
.COM



OVERVIEW

About 50,000 visitors come to Saratoga Race Course to watch thoroughbred horse racing. The 350-acre park balances historic preservation with modern amenities. A big part of that modern experience is a mobile app that engages fans throughout the day. Park owners wanted to upgrade and expand the guest Wi-Fi and further monetize the network. The new captive portal has produced a tremendous increase in targeted, revenue generating marketing and advertising. The Ruckus Wi-Fi ensures fast and reliable access, easily supporting more interactions and transactions and a great fan experience.

CHALLENGES

- Park owners wanted to monetize the Wi-Fi network for marketing and promotions
- The Wi-Fi network had to ensure reliable performance in the face of higher demand

SOLUTION

- 250 Ruckus APs
- Ruckus SmartZone

BENEFITS

- The new captive portal has created hundreds of thousands of impressions that can increase revenue from partners for ads and videos
- The portal has captured tens of thousands of qualified emails for outbound marketing throughout the year
- The Ruckus guest Wi-Fi easily handles increased demand, ensuring that fans can connect and engage with the mobile app

WORLD FAMOUS RACE COURSE BETS ON MONETIZATION OF WI-FI

Saratoga Race Course in upstate New York is the oldest continuously operated thoroughbred racetrack in the U.S. This historic venue is regarded with reverence by racing fans around the world. The New York Racing Association (NYRA), which operates the Saratoga Race Course, recognizes that preservation and modernization are both important to visitors. Which is why the racetrack blends contemporary amenities, like video displays, and echoes of the past, like vintage jockey weighing scales.

Wi-Fi access is a modern amenity that has become an increasingly larger part of a great visitor experience.

Fans often spend hours at Saratoga Race Course, making a full day of their visit. The 350-acre park has lots of places to explore, including historic horse barns, picnic areas, restaurants, and, of course, the races. "People want to use their mobile devices for everything from food ordering to betting. We can see that fans are using the downtime between races to watch replays of past races, which they hope may give them better insights into a horse's performance," says Bob Hughes, Vice President and CIO for the NYRA. "They have to be able to connect to the Wi-Fi network, wherever they are in the park, at any time of the day or evening."

Two years ago, Hughes decided to upgrade the Wi-Fi network. Because his IT staff is small, he wanted a company to handle the design and deployment, and then manage the network on a day-to-day basis. He chose Deep Blue Communication, a Ruckus partner, and one of the leading companies providing Wi-Fi for large entertainment venues. Deep Blue deployed about 250 Ruckus APs to cover the grounds, supporting as many as 15,000 client devices daily.

Deep Blue knew that the NYRA wanted to continue to monetize their Wi-Fi network, generating more interactions, transactions and promotions each time visitors used the guest Wi-Fi. Brian Epstein, Deep Blue's CEO, introduced Hughes to RaGaPa, another Ruckus partner. RaGaPa's CaptiveXS offers a proven Wi-Fi monetization and engagement solution for large public venues.

"We wanted a solution that was easy to deploy, gave us multiple monetization opportunities, and enabled us to engage with our guests in real-time with the least friction possible," says Hughes. "RaGaPa's CaptiveXS solution met those requirements."



“We have to maintain performance in order for visitors to stay on the network. We keep adding capabilities to the mobile app to monetize the Wi-Fi and the Ruckus network simply keeps up. For us, it’s a winning combination.”

BOB HUGHES

Vice President and CIO
New York Racing Association

“The bar for performance is set high in thoroughbred racing. What we’ve achieved at Saratoga Race Course is a Wi-Fi experience that, in our estimation, is the best of any race course in the U.S.”

BRIAN EPSTEIN

Chief Executive Officer
Deep Blue Communication

RUCKUS WI-FI EASILY HANDLES HIGHER USAGE FROM FAN FAVORITE MOBILE APP

Gagandeep Singh, CEO of RaGaPa, describes how the NYRA can use the platform to get closer to customers. “The CaptiveXS platform provides three touchpoints for engagement with customers. Each provides an opportunity to gain valuable information and insights into customer demographics and interests. That information can be used to create targeted promotions.”

The first opportunity is the splash page that fans see when they first log into the captive portal. “CaptiveXS collects information about visitors, including email addresses and demographics that are extremely valuable for marketing promotions. NYRA can also push videos, display banners, surveys or other useful venue specific content right through this splash page,” says Singh.

The second opportunity is in-session, when fans are browsing websites using the guest Wi-Fi. CaptiveXS’ content insertion feature provides the ability to insert venue specific content—promotions, videos etc. on the user’s browser.

Interstitial and bottom banner ads and videos on splash page and during in-session can generate revenue for the NYRA. Third parties may pay \$20–\$25 based on cost per thousand (CPM) impressions. “The more impressions we can deliver, the more revenue NYRA generates,” says Singh. In the first season alone, CaptiveXS Cloud delivered hundreds of thousands of impressions.

After fans have left and even after the season ends, the NYRA can stay in touch. “A qualified email list is worth its weight in gold,” says Singh. “When companies buy lists, it can cost anywhere from 35–50 cents per email address. Even then, there’s a high probability that the list has bad addresses, so companies can waste a lot of money.” In contrast CaptiveXS Cloud captured tens of thousands of qualified emails in the very first year for NYRA.

“In the long run, the CaptiveXS Cloud solution will also enable us to start building a more detailed and comprehensive profiling of our customer base, such as footfall traffic and consumption trends for food and beverages,” says Hughes.

RUCKUS ON TRACK TO HANDLE GREATER MONETIZATION OPPORTUNITIES

On Travers Day, the event that usually draws the highest attendance during the racing season at Saratoga, the Ruckus Wi-Fi network handled an average of more than 1 terabytes of traffic without a problem. “The same network is handling more than twice the number of client sessions without a problem,” says Epstein. “The bar for performance is set high in thoroughbred racing. What we’ve achieved at Saratoga Race Course is a Wi-Fi experience that, in our estimation, is the best of any race course in the U.S.”

Hughes is confident that the Ruckus Wi-Fi network will support increased demands. “We have to maintain performance in order for visitors to stay on the network. We keep adding capabilities to monetize the Wi-Fi and the Ruckus network simply keeps up. For us, it’s a winning combination.”

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