

CASE STUDY



UNITED STATES



RETAIL

**RETAIL GIANT INTERCONNECTS IN-STORE AND
ONLINE SHOPPING EXPERIENCES ON A MASSIVE
SCALE BY LEVERAGING HPE GREENLAKE FOR ARUBA**



Integrate online and in-store shopping experiences to reduce friction and set the stage for growth.



Warehouse-style shopping has a lot going for it. With an intoxicating wealth of goods and services under one roof, there's more than enough to spark the imagination and inspire new projects. With 50,000 unique products in each store and millions available online, customers needed a seamless way to navigate the sheer volume of choices.

"Customer expectations are changing at an all-time fast pace," says Daniel Grider, Vice President of Technology for The Home Depot. "What is their expectation? Where do they want to shop? How do they want to shop? We knew we needed to invest in those priorities to improve customer experiences."

BIG RETAIL, BIG CHANGES, POWERED BY NAAS

As the shopping landscape was changing pre-pandemic, The Home Depot had launched an initiative—One Home Depot—to merge the online and in-store shopping experiences. Then the pandemic began and millions of people started home improvement projects, creating a huge surge in sales—both online and in person.

For The Home Depot to not just keep its doors open, but thrive during a time of great uncertainty, it meant a heightened focus on experiences online and at its more than 2,300 stores. Making it happen would mean massive improvements to the quantity and quality of networking in and around its retail locations, requiring a rollout on an enormous scale.

"We looked at what it would take and the upfront investment to make it happen," Grider recalls. "And then we



REQUIREMENTS

- Build an agile, flexible in-store network architecture
- Make it easier to shop and work

SOLUTION

- HPE GreenLake for Aruba
- Aruba Wi-Fi CERTIFIED 6 Access Points
- Aruba CX 6300 Switch Series
- Aruba Central for cloud-based network management
- Aruba User Experience Insight (UXI)

OUTCOMES

- Extends wireless coverage up to 15x outside retail stores (20 feet vs. 100 yards)
- Helps remove friction from the customer experience by integrating online and in-store experiences
- Provides the agility to scale quickly to significantly expand in-store technology solutions

looked out five years and assessed the cost to refresh it all and we knew we needed a different approach."

Aside from the cost, Grider also wanted to take complexity out of deployments and ongoing management of a networking solution.

This led The Home Depot chose to build its initiative on an Aruba Edge Services Platform (ESP) delivered through HPE GreenLake for Aruba—a network-as-a-service (NaaS) solution that enables deploying resources in a flexible consumption and subscription-based model.

THE FREEDOM TO SCALE, THE POWER TO DO MORE

The Home Depot's new wireless solution includes Aruba access points (APs) managed through Aruba Central with cloud-based artificial intelligence IT operations (AIOps) capabilities for proactive network health and security profile monitoring. The technology includes Aruba Location Services via the Aruba APs.



“ We have a relentless desire to remove friction for our customers. HPE GreenLake for Aruba really gives us the ability to pivot extremely quickly and deliver new solutions as they’re needed. ”

DANIEL GRIDER

Vice President of Technology, The Home Depot

“HPE GreenLake for Aruba not only creates pervasive wireless coverage in each store, but simplifies the management and deployment of new systems moving forward,” says Grider.

Improving outcomes at the edge and beyond

Most importantly, the retailer’s new network makes it easier to shop—and work—at The Home Depot.

“We are a warehouse environment. If you think about our retail space, it is high racking with a lot of products. So, it’s a challenge to move around and continue to get that coverage,” Grider says. “One of the most exciting things about HPE GreenLake for Aruba is the scale of the wireless coverage we can achieve.”

In addition, the implementation enabled The Home Depot to extend the connectivity beyond the traditional edge, to encompass areas outside of its stores as well. “Whether they’re shopping outside in the garden center or at one of our seasonal lots, we want them to be connected,” says Grider.



Paving the way for mobile device innovation

The deployment also paved the way for The Home Depot to custom design new hand-held devices for sales associates.

“We worked with Zebra Technologies to build a phone that takes advantage of all of the technologies in the Aruba access points,” Grider explains. “Now we feel like we’ve really put something into the hands of our associates that empowers them to help customers and help themselves.”

AGILITY WHEN IT COUNTS MOST

With its networking investment, The Home Depot has unlocked new levels of business agility. “HPE GreenLake for Aruba really gives us the ability to pivot extremely quickly and deliver new solutions as they’re needed,” Grider says.

For example, during the earliest days of the pandemic, local governments began mandating curbside pickup options for retailers. Because The Home Depot was classified as an essential business, it found itself needing to rapidly scale its outdoor networking capabilities.

“We didn’t have a big curbside presence before, but once the demand changed, we knew we had the foundation to be able to pivot toward that,” Grider explains. “We’re not just talking about extending wireless 15–20 feet in front of the store. We’re extending coverage 100 yards. That’s a game changing amount of connectivity.”

Always ready to answer the call

When the pandemic happened, and the entire world’s population was suddenly spending unprecedented amounts of time in their own homes, it was no wonder people wanted to make those spaces more comfortable, personal, and efficient. The Home Depot was ready to help.

“We have a culture of just doing the right thing,” Grider says. “We’ve been through natural disasters, both internally at our stores or around the country. So, our teams are used to giving their all.”

“We were well positioned during the pandemic because of the foundation for innovation that supports our teams,” he adds. “The pandemic accelerated a lot of the work and investments we were already planning.”



A HELPING HAND ON THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Another benefit of the retailer's new solution: it is supported and managed by HPE GreenLake for Aruba.

"We trust the people who make the product to roll it out, support it, and manage the day-to-day analytics," Grider explains. "It takes the decision-making burden off of our technology and engineering resources, so they can focus on more strategic business value drivers."

This means Grider and his IT team gain not just the ability to do more, but peace of mind as well. "HPE GreenLake for Aruba has really been critical for us to understand what's going on in our stores from the health, the monitoring, the well-being of all the wireless connectivity."

A relentless pursuit of better

Now that the connectivity is there, The Home Depot is one step closer to making good on its promise of frictionless and interconnected retail experiences.

"We call online the 'front door' to our stores now," Grider says. "What that means for us is that half of the people that place orders online prefer to pick their product up inside our store. They don't want us to deliver it to them."

"So, we know how important it is to have the same experience everywhere—from browsing online at home to the moment they step in our store," he adds. "It's got to be the same."

Overall, The Home Depot is using connectivity to support the retailer's emphasis on making customer journeys shopper-driven. "They're in the driver's seat of where they want to go and how they want to get there," says Grider. "It's up to us to meet them on that journey."

