



“Smart Living-as-a-Service” innovator is transforming the multifamily connectivity paradigm with Aruba ESP, Central and UXI

Customer Profile

Homebase is pioneering the next generation of multifamily and vacation rental experiences by introducing “Smart Living-as-a-Service” (SLaaS) building automation to transform the residential real estate industry. Its app-enabled solution helps to increase value and reduce costs for building owners while providing residents with modern, highly connected, and automated living experiences. Homebase’s rapidly growing smart building portfolio is adding numerous units across North America.

Vertical: Real Estate

Location: Kansas City, Missouri, United States

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Use Case

Assist with transforming the multifamily and vacation rental industries by supplying reliable, secure, high-performance Internet connectivity that enables deploying existing and emerging IoT-based smart building technologies while also delivering Wi-Fi connectivity as a fifth utility to residents to create comprehensive SLaaS experiences.

REQUIREMENTS

Adopt cloud-managed wired and wireless infrastructure

Deploy a scalable, flexible, high-performance network

Support existing and emerging smart building automation solutions

SOLUTION

Aruba Indoor and outdoor Wi-Fi CERTIFIED 6 APs

Aruba Remote Access Points

Aruba 2930F Switch Series

Aruba 3810 Switch Series

Aruba Central for cloud-based network management

Aruba User Experience Insight

OUTCOMES

Gained future-ready infrastructure for introducing Smart Living-as-a-Service (SLaaS) to the multifamily and vacation rental industries

Increases property net operating income 20% and overall property values

Saves building owners and managers 120 minutes per unit turnover and 20 minutes per maintenance ticket on average

Includes intuitive, AI-enabled tools that empower business users to manage and troubleshoot in real time

Scales rapidly and dynamically to accommodate a swiftly growing property portfolio

Enables quickly adopting new networking innovations to continue introducing emerging smart building technologies

To complete its transformative new business model for supplying Smart Living-as-a-Service (SLaaS) in multifamily housing, Homebase needed a wired and wireless networking partner.

“We set out to create the industry’s first hubless smart building solution to help apartment owners and managers automate their facilities while delivering connectivity-as-a-service to residents,” explains Blake Miller, Founder and CEO of the Kansas City, Missouri, company. “To achieve our goals we needed to provide always-on internet, which required a comprehensive wired and wireless solution capable of integrating with our mobile-phone-as-a-gateway, app-based approach.”

Technologies + Expertise Make Aruba the Right Partner

Dedicated to making the Internet a fifth utility for multifamily communities, Homebase is rapidly partnering with apartment owners to assemble a portfolio of smart apartment complexes scattered across North America. To do so, the company not only required a cloud-managed, reliable, secure and scalable wired and wireless networking solution, but also intuitive tools that empowered business users to resolve networking issues in real time.

After evaluating leading options, Homebase decided to partner with Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company. "In addition to providing a robust set of APIs for integrating with our customer-facing app and Wi-Fi access points with built-in Bluetooth and Zigbee for IoT connectivity, we were impressed with the many innovations in the pipeline," Miller says.

"Perhaps most importantly, the Aruba team immediately grasped our vision and helped us determine which technologies were required to make it happen," he adds. "By demonstrating that kind of enthusiasm for our business, even before we selected Aruba, we knew the partnership was right."

Aruba ESP Powers Superior SLaaS Experiences

For its network powered by the Aruba Edge Services Platform (ESP), Homebase selected Aruba's indoor and outdoor Wi-Fi 6 access points (APs) along with Remote Access Points (RAPs), 2930F Switch Series and 3810 Switch Series.

The Homebase infrastructure also includes Aruba Central, for AI-enabled cloud-based network management built on a cloud-native microservices architecture, and Aruba User Experience Insight (UXI) sensors, for continuously monitoring and testing the network from a user perspective.

"Our deployment model provides every apartment in a building with Wi-Fi as an amenity," says Miller. "In addition, we cover indoor and outdoor common areas to help streamline facilities management significantly. This strategy of creating a single network also gives property managers secure connectivity for their staff."

Wi-Fi as Utility for Residents; Increased Profitability for Owners

Unlike the current paradigm, where a resident moves in and then contacts an ISP for connectivity, Homebase-powered buildings supply Wi-Fi the moment a person enters their new home – just like turning on the lights or getting a drink of water.

Using the Homebase app, residents can access everything in their home, ranging from locks to appliances. "One of our buildings, 'Flashcube' in Kansas City, even offers a connected wine dispenser that automatically adds purchases to a resident's account," Miller says.

New residents are granted access to a premium tier of Wi-Fi for a select amount of time, which enables them to test out the Homebase solution, and then are prompted by the app to select a subscription plan.

"Using data generated by Central, we determined a substantial percentage of residents opt for the premium subscription tier once their trial period ends, others choose a lower tier and only few opt-out," says RaeAnn Lovall, Chief People Officer for Homebase. "We can also use the data we gather to help owners maximize tier pricing."

New revenue, enhanced efficiency, automated maintenance and risk reduction

From a building owner perspective, the SLaaS model not only supplies a considerable new revenue stream but also enhances efficiencies with the Homebase app. This includes anywhere, anytime management of physical access controls and security cameras in common areas and community spaces, such as gyms, pools and movie facilities.

“Having a single, robust network with all of these capabilities saves property owners money while also ensuring they have one less vendor to worry about,” Miller says.

In addition, the Homebase app streamlines and automates maintenance, saving an average of 20 minutes per ticket. “For example, after a unit’s smart thermostat runs for a certain number of hours the app can notify management the HVAC filter needs changing, automatically order the part for direct shipment to the appropriate unit and notify the resident,” says Miller.

Such maintenance automation can also drive down risks and reduce associated insurance costs. “If an IoT plumbing sensor detects a water-related issue, a timely notification via the app can eliminate a catastrophic event,” Miller says.

Saving 120 minutes per unit turn during move out/move in

According to Lovall, building owners and managers especially appreciate the app during move out/move in periods, which helps them save 120 minutes per unit turn on average.

“When multiple units are turning over simultaneously, using a few taps to remove a former occupant and onboard a new one reduces costs and boosts efficiency compared to the traditional manual process,” she says.

“Overall, we’re not only streamlining building control but also enabling the management of more units without added staffing overhead,” says Lovall.

Cloud Management Key to Speed and Agility

The benefits to Homebase are also numerous, ranging from sales to troubleshooting. “Using Aruba’s reliable and secure infrastructure enables us to lean on its networking expertise as we develop new business models for property owners.” Miller says.

Although Homebase uses a standardized building deployment, it’s not one-size-fits-all as their networking solution supplies flexibility in situations where a resident requires more coverage. “Central’s cloud-based management enables quickly configuring and installing an RAP to extend the network as needed,” Lovall says.

Network management is also simplified. “Central’s intuitive dashboard enables a single business user to support multiple buildings,” says Lovall. “We can easily adjust configurations such as bandwidth and device limits to effectively manage performance across buildings with hundreds of users, each of whom has multiple devices.”

Troubleshooting is also streamlined. “When we receive a support ticket from a resident or building owner we can frequently resolve it in just a few minutes,” says Paul Schultz, Director of Client Success. “This assists us with supplying exceptional customer service.”

Scaling the Deployment for Superior Experiences and Performance

As it continues to grow and introduce new SLaaS offerings to the multifamily industry, Homebase looks forward to leveraging existing and emerging Aruba solutions.

Near term, the company intends to deploy UXI sensors for further optimizing and troubleshooting its Wi-Fi infrastructure. “Having a centralized view of user and device experiences is critically important to keeping customer satisfaction high and our overhead low,” Miller says.

Another project is deploying Aruba AirPass to facilitate seamless device handoffs from 5G cellular networks to Wi-Fi. “We’re actively working with 5G and considering how we can deploy AirPass for smoothing transitions.”

Innovating rapidly to continue transforming the multifamily industry

On the horizon are evaluations of Aruba’s AOS-CX switching line, for more AI-infused network visibility, performance and automation, as well as leveraging Aruba’s Location Services capabilities in combination with the Bluetooth and Zigbee built into Aruba APs.

“Among other things, this technology lends itself to the smart building digital twin approach,” says Miller. “We could offer location services upgrades to building owners for asset tracking and monitoring third-party vendors working in their buildings. And as new technologies, such as floor and window cleaning robots, become more prevalent, our wired and wireless infrastructure will enable adding them quickly.”

“In short,” he continues, “our Aruba network becomes a platform for smart building innovation, rather than tying us down with obsolete and one-trick-pony hubs. We can innovate rapidly as we continue transforming multifamily dwellings into smart spaces that can keep pace with the evolving ways people live and work in their homes.”

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BLAKE MILLER, FOUNDER AND CEO, HOMEBASE