

Wifirst pioneers WiFi as a service for European businesses

Client

Wifirst

Business

ISP

Products and services

Ethernet Line, Ethernet Hub & Spoke, IP Access, Wave

Challenge

To underpin WiFi as a service with secure, reliable, high-bandwidth fibre connectivity.

Wifirst underpins managed WiFi services with high-bandwidth fibre connectivity from Colt

The French founder of Wifirst, Marc Taieb, established the company in 2002 to address a gap in the market: internet connectivity and premium WiFi services for professional use, such as student residences. “Students depend on internet access for academic work, but also for social media, video gaming, streaming and much more besides,” confirms Vincent Jouan, Technical Sales Director at Wifirst.

The Wifirst solution provides a shared physical WiFi infrastructure, on which each student can use an individual ‘room area network’ (RAN) to securely connect all their devices to each other and to the internet — just as they would do at home. Security features built into the service keep each room area network separate and private.

The managed WiFi service was soon extended to other markets with a similar need for a large number of personal networks, including hotels, holiday parks, army bases and many more. Now the company is seeing increased demand from the enterprise market as working styles change. Organisations need higher bandwidth and more secure connectivity than ever before to support increased mobility, intensive data usage, and access to hosted and cloud-based applications.

A foundation for enterprise digital services

“To provision the high-capacity fibre-based internet access on which our high-density WiFi networks depend, we work with providers and partners like Colt,” says Vincent Jouan.

In the case of creative agency Havas Village (also known as HKX) in London, for example, Colt provides Layer 2 services to Wifirst, which allows Wifirst to deliver up to 10Gbps of bandwidth to the Havas building. Wifirst also provides Havas with a number of point-to-point links using Colt’s resilient backbone, guaranteeing connectivity to the company’s 1,700 employees.

“We know that Colt can deliver the quality and bandwidth that enterprises expect from their internet connections,” says Vincent Jouan. “This is critical, as the managed WiFi infrastructure effectively becomes the enterprise’s foundation for digital services.”

For example, a hotel that uses the Wifirst service to provide rooms with WiFi can also connect receptionists’ tablets over WiFi to the property management system for guest check-in, and install WiFi speakers to play music in common areas.

“We’ve consistently been impressed by the expertise and responsiveness of Colt’s project managers, who help to ensure on-time delivery of complex projects, even when deadlines are tight,” says Vincent Jouan.



As well as using Colt for internet access in major European cities, Wifirst also incorporates Colt connectivity into its international backbone network. In the UK alone, it interconnects with the Colt IQ Network in two colocation data centres.

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Vincent Jouan,
Technical Sales Director, Wifirst

International expansion follows domestic growth

Wifirst’s business has grown rapidly as customers have adopted managed premium WiFi across their operations: the company currently serves 730,000 rooms across all verticals. Customers include a hotel group with more than 1,500 rooms; and a European chain of car repair centres whose employees access business applications over WiFi.



In 2020 Wifirst was listed as one of France’s Top 500 companies for growth¹. Now Wifirst is focused on extending its geographic reach. Already building a strong presence in the UK, the company’s wider European development is also underway, supported by new investors, Amundi PEF and BPI (French public bank for investment).

The scale and density of Colt’s fibre network coverage (28,500+ buildings in 200+ cities and 50+ metropolitan areas worldwide) will enable Wifirst to connect customers’ buildings quickly and easily in multiple locations. “We know Colt can cover all our fibre connectivity needs throughout Europe and globally as a provider or a partner, and we see plenty of scope on the horizon for developing our relationship.”



1. Source: Les champions de la croissance 2020, published by Les Echos and Statista, February 2020

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