

Making a power play with connectivity at the home of hockey's Tampa Bay Lightning

Managed WiFi scores by lifting fan experience, seizing marketing opportunities at AMALIE Arena

From hosting concerts to sports events to other major gatherings, AMALIE Arena has been a center of the Tampa, Florida community since 1996. That begins with the Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team, which calls the arena home. Other Tampa area residents know the AMALIE Arena as an attractive venue for many of today's hottest musical and comedy acts.

To ensure their many patrons always enjoy the best possible experience, Vinik Sports Group, which owns the Tampa Bay Lightning, has forged a lasting technology partnership with Spectrum Business.

Andrew McIntyre, Vinik's Senior Vice President for Technology & Innovation, describes the relationship as central to the arena's growth:

"Spectrum Business provides a couple of mission critical services to our organization, and it starts with connectivity to the internet," he says. "While our wired infrastructure is our backbone, our WiFi is also extremely important. We use WiFi to manage all our ticket scanning and many of our food and beverage points of sale. We also make it available to the fans for free so they can interact with social media while enjoying the game."

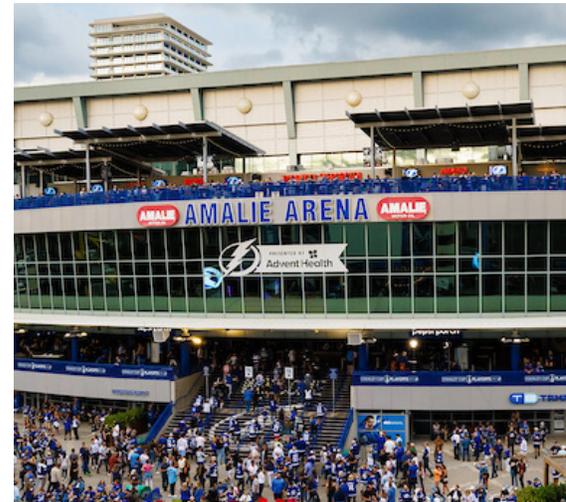
Putting connectivity at the center

Reliable connectivity is of paramount importance to the AMALIE Arena, whether it is servicing media feeds at home games or addressing public safety needs in a rapid and comprehensive fashion.

"You can't operate in today's world without outstanding technology supporting every aspect of your business," McIntyre explains. "There's not one piece of our operations I can think of that is not reliant on technology in one way or another."

Powering AMALIE Arena's connectivity solution are two [Dedicated Fiber Internet \(DFI\)](#) circuits, installed by Spectrum Business in different parts of the seven-level, 670,000 square-foot building. One circuit delivers connectivity to the arena itself; the other powers WiFi to users within the arena.

Whenever the Tampa Bay Lightning is at the AMALIE Arena in a playoff or championship game, Spectrum Business fiber provides the signal that carries the action on the ice out to the world.



To service typical capacity crowds of nearly 20,000 people, Tampa's AMALIE Arena requires high-speed fiber connectivity from Spectrum Business. Says Andrew McIntyre, Senior Vice President for Technology & Innovation, Vinik Sports Group. "In today's world, I find we've all become technology companies in some way."

Client profile



Company
AMALIE Arena

Industry
Hospitality

Services
Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI)
Managed WiFi
Fiber Connect Plus TV

Overview

- For over a decade, the ownership group of AMALIE Arena in Tampa, Florida has leveraged Spectrum Business fiber solutions to deliver connectivity to patrons attending Tampa Bay Lightning hockey games and other events.
- In recent years, escalating usage of mobile devices has made superior WiFi service essential to meeting guest expectations.
- Data-driven fan analytics are now central in professional hockey. Like other teams in their league, the Tampa Bay Lightning must track WiFi activity throughout their stadium to better understand what fans want.

Outcomes

- To ensure AMALIE Arena enjoys robust internet access for patrons and broadcasters while simultaneously servicing their WiFi needs, two Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI) circuits have been installed, capable of delivering ultra-high speed data.
- Managed WiFi has been deployed, incorporating 431 access points, to better service capacity audiences anywhere inside the building while allowing user data collection.
- Video services for the arena's 71 special suites, concession stands and other locations to improve fan experience is supported by Fiber Connect Plus TV, which also leverages internet connectivity.

Why it matters

- Data collected by AMALIE Arena WiFi feeds analytical modeling that informs marketing strategies both for the hockey team and for other special activities held there.
- Spectrum Business connectivity is also deployed by the ownership group to leverage and coordinate their operations at other locations in and around Tampa.



Fiber Connect Plus TV is utilized at AMALIE Arena in many ways, from providing game coverage at concession stands to streaming video from broadcast affiliates. "If you are unable to look at the ice, you still can catch the game," says Andrew McIntyre, SVP of Technology & Innovation, Vinik Sports Group.

Having powerful internet service also matters for spectators. "It goes beyond raising the entertainment value," McIntyre notes. "You have a lot of business entertainment happening where people have to take phone calls or send emails. We want to make sure they are able to get work done while they enjoy the game."

Driving value with Managed WiFi

WiFi has long been part of AMALIE Arena operations, but in recent years demand has grown exponentially for better, faster service. It's not only a matter of satisfying patrons but also expediting ticket sales, improving social media marketing opportunities and developing useful analytics regarding what people want and use.

Data-based analytics have become marketing's new frontier. At sports events, AMALIE Arena can closely track fan engagement by collecting data from mobile device use. Intelligence gleaned from this data provides valuable insight as to what patrons want most. In partnership with a leading analytics company, the hockey league recently made collecting this information a

requirement for all its teams, including the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"You get rich data sets that tell you in detail what people who come to the arena look for," McIntyre explains. "The league wants to know its fan base better, and so do we."

McIntyre asked Spectrum Business to design a WiFi system that would meet this mandate and provide higher overall quality of service. This was accomplished with the installation of [Managed WiFi](#).

"I think of Spectrum Business as a critical component in making sure that our entire operation is successful."

- Andrew McIntyre, SVP, Technology & Innovation, Vinik Sports Group

Combined with analytical software, Managed WiFi allows McIntyre's IT team to have the added capacity to capture data from across the stadium at a level that meets the league's threshold and helps inform future marketing inside and outside the arena. "The Managed WiFi system



Wherever people gather in and around AMALIE Arena, whether for hockey games, concerts or other events, strong WiFi is a must. "Spectrum Business WiFi gives us flexibility in how we communicate, operate and stay successful," says Andrew McIntyre, SVP of Technology and Innovation, Vinik Sports Group.

gives us great insights into the analytics," McIntyre says. "To me, the more insights you have across your systems, the better."

Four hundred thirty-one access points, each monitored and maintained by Spectrum Business technicians, boost the WiFi signal to any part of the building.

"Our engineers went to the manufacturer of the WiFi equipment and had them run testing to make sure the design we were putting in met the arena's needs," recalls Brenda Collins, Sales Manager, Spectrum Business. "It was a weeks-long, meticulous process that involved use maps and coverage area testing for each end user on the site. It was highly customized, with all aspects thoroughly tested before we handed it off."

Video enhances arena experience

Another core piece of the organization's strategy concerns video. Video service is critical at the AMALIE Arena, whether used in one of their 71 private suites or at their concession stands, inner walkways, scoreboard displays and

press box. The Tampa Bay Lightning coaching staff even uses video to prepare for upcoming games.

To ensure the best quality service for all these needs and more, AMALIE Arena upgraded to [Fiber Connect Plus TV](#), a highly customizable IP video solution that eliminates the need for onsite equipment.

"Quite honestly, the building never sleeps. Our security staff, our facility services, there's always someone in the building working. That means all of our systems need to be working as well."

- Andrew McIntyre, SVP, Technology & Innovation, Vinik Sports Group

"Fiber Connect Plus allows the arena to choose the channels they want to display from the full lineup," explains Jeremy Jaeger, Sales Engineer, Spectrum Business. "It is designed to be easy to use, reliable and with no in-room equipment required."

From leveraging the video feed from a regional sports network throughout the arena to allowing patrons to stay connected to the game while away from their seats, McIntyre describes video as "extremely important" in many ways: "Video is critical for us not only from a fan experience perspective but in helping our hockey team stay competitive on the ice."

Pulling marketing intelligence from the air

McIntyre is eager to learn what analytics say about user activity at the AMALIE Arena, whether the event being hosted is a concert or a hockey game:

"What's our WiFi activity when a concert rolls in? What are ways we can better drive usage and participation? With WiFi, you get rich data sets, and I'm excited to be able to dig into them."

John Moran, Strategic Accounts Manager, Spectrum Business notes his team proactively monitors the Managed WiFi service to make sure it is always doing its part to capture a full profile of customer behavior.

"They have their own big IT staff at the Arena, but we have brought in our managed services support team, our specialists and our partners to ensure they have everything they need," he says.

Thinking outside the arena

Many organizations are managed or supported by Vinik Sports Group across the greater Tampa area. These include the Lightning's practice facility, TGH Ice Plex; the Yuengling Center where the University of South Florida's varsity basketball and volleyball teams play; the open-air entertainment venue Sparkman Wharf; and the nonprofit innovation hub Embarc Collective.



The Tampa Bay Lightning competes at the highest level year after year. They need reliable, fast connectivity to share their championship success with their fans. "Spectrum Business helps us bring our fans closer to the ice," says Andrew McIntyre, SVP of Technology and Innovation at Vinik Sports Group.

There are also fundraising operations managed through the Tampa Bay Lightning community service arm, the Lightning Foundation. Some community activities are hosted in Ford Thunder Alley, a large plaza just outside the AMALIE Arena.

"Any operation that we have full control over is leveraging Spectrum Business," McIntyre says. "When I'm advising my clients as a consultant on what they should be doing at their own facilities, Spectrum Business usually runs right to the top of that list."

The partnership is also important for a recently launched mobile app. "We are pushing all of our mobile fan experiences through this application, so it is truly a team and venue app," McIntyre explains. "Obviously connectivity to it is where WiFi comes into play pretty massively."

McIntyre regards Spectrum Business as a highly useful extension of his own IT group at AMALIE Arena: "We run a pretty lean IT team, so it's important for us to identify strong partnerships to help us deliver for our fans and for our business operations. For quite some time, Spectrum Business has been a strong partner of ours."

"I always feel really comfortable knowing there are people from Spectrum Business ready and able to help us should any issue arise. They are a trusted advisor as well as a great partner that delivers great services."

- Andrew McIntyre, SVP, Technology & Innovation, Vinik Sports Group

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