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How Nile Helped SparkCognition Deploy A Truly Secure, Hands-Off Network

Nile Access Service meets deadline, exceeds expectations

Fortune 500 companies from around the globe and across industries rely on Austin-based SparkCognition for enterprise AI solutions. The core competencies that have made the company a leader in AI – reducing uncertainty, increasing security and eliminating downtime – are the same capabilities SparkCognition looks for in its technology partners.

Most recently, SparkCognition was on the hunt for a new way to network, one that would solve its connectivity and security challenges and allow its IT team to focus on strategic initiatives. Nile proved to be an ideal partner with its next-gen wired and wireless networking solution

Challenges	Tight timeline for network deployment	Loss of confidence in network performance	Inability to provide secure access for devices connecting to the network	Untenable number of network connectivity tickets
Outcomes	Entirely new network deployed in two days	Restored confidence with guaranteed connectivity	Zero-trust network protects against social engineering, malware and tampering	Resilient network, constantly analyzing and self-tuning

Tight timeline

The opening of a new SparkCognition location meant building a network infrastructure from the ground up in less than three weeks. SparkCognition was looking for a high-end solution that would provide superior connectivity at the new office. They relied on Nile for everything from the initial site survey to network planning and hardware installation.

“Once the building was completed, we had a very short window to set up the new network before employees started moving in,” they explain. “Nile had designed the network and provided all of the equipment, all we had to do was plug it in and we were good to go. With Nile, we were up and running in just two days.”

Today, Nile provides a secure, reliable network for 300-plus SparkCognition employees. With support for its new flexible, open work environment, Nile enables the company’s mobile, collaborative workforce – from desks and cubicle spaces to conference rooms.

There are no capex spikes or overpaying of opex. We simply pay-per-user and scale as we go. This truly is network-as-a-service.

– ADRIAN BROWN, VP OF SECURITY, IT, AND PRODUCT OPERATIONS

Once bitten, twice shy

Working with Nile to roll out an optimized network gave SparkCognition the opportunity to get rid of numerous issues with the previous LAN solution. Those included unstable devices that led to network performance problems, unreliable and aged equipment, network latencies, lack of redundancy, packet loss, manual cabling and time-consuming and complicated configuration and updates.

“We had so many IT tickets at the old location, sometimes people would just walk into the IT office to complain about the wi-fi,” SparkCognition says. “At one point, we had people resorting to using their phones as hotspots.”

In addition to the connection and connectivity issues, management was a nightmare for the IT staff, particularly staying on top of software and hardware updates.

Dreaming of an all-inclusive, high-end network solution

With Nile, however, it's a different story. SparkCognition now has a network architecture tailored to meet today's connectivity challenges and tomorrow's needs. The new location has high-definition connectivity anywhere its people are. Nile designed SparkCognition's network infrastructure to ensure every user at every desk, office and conference room is supported with the capacity and coverage they need. Network performance is guaranteed by Nile's service level agreements (SLAs), assuring SparkCognition that the network is working at its best. As more users access the network, the Nile Customer portal gives them x-ray visibility and insight into the context of the network such as new devices joining and application and infrastructure performance. A one-stop shop for visibility is extremely valuable for troubleshooting outside the core network.

“Nile handles network performance and has eliminated the IT tickets,” says SparkCognition. “Now all we have to do is troubleshoot issues outside of the core network, which is simple thanks to the deep visibility Nile provides.”

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– SPARKCOGNITION

Day 0 to N – it's all included

With its previous provider, SparkCognition was burdened with network configurations and manual updates that added human risk with change management. That's now handled automatically by the Nile team. Lifecycle management, including hardware updates, software upgrades and security patches are all taken care of at no extra cost.

So, what does the IT team do with all its extra time now? SparkCognition reports that they can be more impactful to the business by focusing on strategic areas like product releases.

“I haven’t had any wi-fi complaints at all,” says SparkCognition. “In fact, I’ve skipped my last two check-in meetings with Nile because there’s nothing to talk about, everything is working as intended.”

A secured solution

Improving the network’s security posture was critical in the new building network roll out. Prior to Nile, social engineering and man-in-the-middle tactics were a real threat.

The security of Nile’s solution includes IEEE 802.1X across wireless and wired ports protecting against social engineering attacks. Additionally, end-to-end MACsec encryption within the Nile network debilitates any possible rogue attacks and facilitates a safe and secure working environment.

“With Nile, everything is segmented and secured, from device to user to traffic flow,” SparkCognition explains. “I have the confidence that my network performance is protected from threats.”

Looking forward

SparkCognition is growing faster than ever, which means significant expansion at its 50-acre research and development campus. They are happy to have Nile on their side this time for the network roll out at the new buildings.

“On a recent new site deployment, I had to do everything except the cabling for that building,” they explain. “With Nile, the experience is the complete opposite. They handle it all.”

Adrian Brown, vice president of security, IT, and product operations, appreciates the simplicity of network consumption enabled by Nile’s holistic pay-per-user model. “There are no capex spikes or overpaying of opex. We simply pay per user and scale as we go,” Brown says. “This truly is a network-as-a-service model.”

Asked how he would describe Nile to other IT administrators, SparkCognition has this to say: “Imagine what a day would be like not dealing with all of the tiny, minute details of managing your wired or wireless network, that’s what you get with Nile. It’s like a dream.”

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