

TAO Group: The ultimate nightclub and restaurant experience

Highlights

- TAO Group is a premier restaurant and nightlife group with over 20 venues in New York, Las Vegas, and Sydney.
- As soon as a guest walks in the door, TAO works to provide a complete sensory experience. From the ambiance to the lighting to the food, TAO takes everything into account to offer guests a rich and differentiated hospitality experience.
- TAO chose the Arista Cognitive WiFi™ for its ease of use, central web portal, tracking and analytics, bulletproof security, and incredible customer service.
- TAO also loves that Arista Cognitive WiFi provides specific demographic information and analytics so they can improve venues and offer a more relevant guest experience.
- “Arista is so valuable to TAO Group because their WiFi analytics provides specific demographics on the exact groups we’re trying to target,” says IT Director John Watson.

For a delightful nightclub and restaurant experience, look no further than TAO Group. Escape the Las Vegas heat at TAO Beach, an exotic daytime party. Sit back and enjoy world-famous cuisine at LAVO Italian Restaurant & Nightclub in New York. Be a part of the ultimate nightclub playground at Marquee in The Star Sydney. Whatever your preference, TAO Group offers premier nightclub and restaurant experiences at over 20 venues in New York, Las Vegas, and Sydney – and they’re expanding to open new venues in Chicago, as well as ultramodern hotels in Los Angeles and New York.



“In a matter of minutes, and without being on-site, I can deploy a new WiFi network or create splash pages to enhance a guest experience. We can provide a personalized experience for thousands of people. Arista helped us eliminate the other competitors by offering every wireless functionality we required in one solution.”

– John Watson, IT Director, TAO Group



The Challenge

Technology is the key to amazing guest experiences

In the restaurant, nightclub, and (coming soon) hotel industries, TAO's key differentiator is its laser focus on one key thing: an exceptional and full guest experience. According to IT Director John Watson, the company thinks about how to exceed expectations for every step of the guest journey and how to offer a complete sensory experience as soon as a guest enters the door—lighting, food, ambiance, presentation, and technology—even WiFi. But TAO doesn't implement technology just for technology's sake. Watson looks to WiFi as an invisible enabler of an exceptional experience and one that allows TAO to better understand its guests. “The guest should just sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride without having the technology get in the way,” he explains.

When Watson joined TAO Group in 2008, he realized that WiFi was not just a way to interact with guests, but it would also become a marketing tool that empowers all TAO staff members to promote the company. Most importantly, WiFi is a critical way for TAO to offer innovative services and to stay relevant with guests.

And of course the WiFi must be secure. Any wireless solution would have to provide comprehensive security against wireless intrusions and maximum privacy protection for guests. With that, PCI compliance is another top priority for John and his team.

The Solution

Picture this: It's a Saturday night, and Watson is doing some research on WiFi vendors. “TAO had gone through several iterations of different WiFi solutions,” he said. “For one reason or another, we were never completely satisfied and were always on the lookout for something better. As we evolved, we learned even more about what we really needed in a WiFi solution.” Ease of use, central management, great support, custom splash pages, tracking, cost-effectiveness, and security—each vendor had some of these features, but Watson didn't see any that had them all—at least not until that evening when he discovered Arista. That night, Watson made several vendor inquiries, but he was immediately impressed with Arista when he heard back in a matter of minutes, and so began a very rewarding relationship. “Arista helped us eliminate the other competitors by offering every wireless functionality we required in one solution,” says Watson.

A personalized experience without sacrifices

Initially, what Watson loved about working with Arista was the exceptional customer service and partnership approach. “Arista's responsiveness and our initial conversation set them apart, not just as a wireless vendor but as a partner. I was looking for a company that would innovate and work with us to truly transform our guest experience, and that's what I found in Arista. They really differentiated themselves from the other vendors.” TAO has a very tight and lean IT team, managing many physical locations. They needed a solution that wouldn't require a lot of extra resources or management but that would still give them the capability to interact with thousands of guests across many different venues.

Watson was blown away by Arista's central management feature and the ease of use. It gave him the ability to manage the TAO WiFi network from anywhere in the world via the Internet without having to implement controller-based solutions at each location. "In a matter of minutes, and without being onsite, I can deploy a new WiFi network or create splash pages to enhance a guest experience," he says. And this is a huge advantage for big or specialty events. John points out, "We can provide a personalized experience for thousands of people. It makes a convention manager's day when we can create a customized splash page with their colors and logo. Being able to do this doesn't cost us anything extra and gives us the ability to positively transform an event and earn our customers' loyalty."

Get to know your guests:

The power of demographic data Implementing guest WiFi has even changed the way TAO does business. Their New York market is very different than their Las Vegas market, but by using Arista Cognitive WiFi to collect demographic data, TAO can fine-tune a targeted approach to engage with guests in any venue.

As Watson explains, "Arista is so valuable to TAO Group because their WiFi analytics provides specific demographics on the exact groups we're trying to target. How often are they visiting a venue? Are they male or female? Which days are popular? Other companies pay thousands of dollars for this kind of data, but our guests are actually opting in and providing us with this information themselves via WiFi. What we are able to do with that information and how we analyze it will only make their customer experience even better."

TAO Group has already seen the benefits. According to John, "At a single venue in New York, we were able to collect 4,000 email addresses in just one month. Not long ago, we would have paid thousands of dollars in marketing and ads to get those addresses, but now this information is available for free simply because we have the Arista Cognitive WiFi in place."

Constant innovation

When creating an incredible guest experience, there's a fine line between offering innovative technology and not being intrusive, and that line can sometimes be a moving target. Watson notes that trial-and-error is an important part of testing WiFi initiatives and to always be on the side of surprise and delight. The flexibility of the CloudVision® WiFi platform allows TAO to better understand their guest's desires and preferences by testing advertising, notifications, placement of WiFi, the number of login steps or clicks required, and more.

For anyone who walks that fine line of exceptional guest experiences, WiFi is one of TAO's best engagement mediums. As Watson says, "The secret to TAO's success is being able to better understand their guests' needs and wants—from convenience and innovation to security and privacy. And one of the best secrets we have for understanding our guests is our Arista Cognitive WiFi."

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