

EXCeL LONDON: COVERAGE WHERE IT COUNTS

For ExCeL London, the UK's busiest conference and exhibition centre, providing good communications services for visitors is vital. Using state-of-the-art InBuilding from Arqiva, the site has been able to guarantee excellent mobile coverage for both staff and visitors.

Mobile phone use plays a key role in most business activity – and no more so than when people are away at an all-day event. At the ExCeL London International Conference and Exhibition centre, literally everyone on site – staff, exhibitors and business visitors – is working in a remote capacity using a variety of equipment including mobile phones, laptops and PDAs.

Built in 2000 and situated at London's historic Victoria Dock, ExCeL London is part of one of Europe's largest regeneration projects, covering an area of 100 acres. It offers contemporary conference and exhibition space to a wide range of industries.

Timo Bayford, Head of IT at ExCeL London explains: *"When the first part of the centre opened in 2000, it was evident that mobile network coverage was a problem – there was none. And, in a situation where you have lots of exhibitors needing to connect computers or wireless devices as well as visitors who need to keep in touch while they are at an event, that's a big problem."*

The lack of signal was caused by the building's strengthened, column free structure which shielded out signals from external macro cells. This was not only potentially problematic for visitors and exhibitors, it was causing operational difficulties for ExCeL London staff.

"We often use mobile telephones to communicate with one another," Timo Bayford explains. "Not being able to get coverage inside the centre had quite an impact on the flow of communication."

Additionally, because of the sheer volume of people on site at peak times, ExCeL London needed to be able to guarantee maximum capacity. To solve these problems before the rest of the centre was completed, ExCeL London invited Arqiva to provide it with an InBuilding system offering high-quality, stable coverage.



An outstanding exhibition

Arqiva supplied the centre with an active DAS system (Distributed Antenna System) that included 40 antenna points. These were distributed evenly throughout the centre to cater for occasions when the venue hosts multiple events and the exhibition halls are split into a number of different spaces. The antennas were then connected to base equipment located in a centralised control room.

Since the centre was still unfinished at the time, Arqiva had to tailor the InBuilding implementation process both to avoid any impact on events taking place at ExCel London and to accommodate the ongoing building work. The system was implemented in stages as each part of the centre became available. And the whole system is now being upgraded to 3G without any further disruption.

The results have been excellent. Staff and visitors can now use their mobile phones in any part of the venue. They benefit from the same excellent quality, capacity and availability – even when the venue is full.

As Timo Bayford points out: *“Most of the people who attend events here aren’t having a day off. They still have businesses to run and clients to deal with. Implementing the InBuilding system has given us an opportunity to show we understand this and to demonstrate that we are a business venue.”*



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