

O₂ Wifi helps Canary Wharf become the smart city of the future



Canary Wharf is an icon of 21st Century success. More than 100,000 people work in the development's 16 million square feet of office, retail and leisure space. As part of its vision of a smart city, Canary Wharf Group has rolled out O₂ Wifi to provide the connectivity that they believe is now just as important as streetlights to the people who live and work there.

Eric Van der Kleij, Specialist Technology Advisor to Canary Wharf Group, is a passionate evangelist for free public wifi.

"When you create a place like Canary Wharf, you have to provide a great infrastructure," he says, "such as transport links, easy pedestrian access, power, all the basic stuff.

"But we knew we also had to create a great info-structure – the digital services that are just as much a part of the fabric of our lives. You wouldn't build a place like Canary Wharf without streetlights and, these days, digital services are just as important. They have to be effortlessly ubiquitous, especially for a digitally-connected community like the one we serve."

The digital community

Being well connected means different things to different groups. For the people working at Canary Wharf, it means they can make better use of the space and create a work/life balance that means they're not disconnected from the things that are important to them – family, friends, or business.

It's just as important for visitors to stay in touch while they're at Canary Wharf, whether they're visiting for business or leisure. For Canary Wharf Group, the digital experience is now a fundamental part of the sense of place that people feel when they are visiting the area.

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CANARY WHARF GROUP PLC

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Mixing business and leisure

As you might expect, many of the people connecting to the free public wifi service at Canary Wharf are working for some of the global financial giants based in the surrounding soaring towers. But there's much more to life at Canary Wharf than high finance.

More than 7000 of the people working there are employed solely in TMT companies, including many small, agile start-ups.

There are also more than 260 cafés, bars, restaurants and shops serving the people who live and work at Canary Wharf. And there's a vibrant cultural life, with nearly 200 arts and entertainment events throughout the year.

Parlour gains

Reliable public wifi is a key benefit for these venues. It helps to attract people to the area, which in turn drives footfall into the shops, cafés and other businesses serving the community.

One of those businesses is The Parlour bar and restaurant, which opened at Canary Wharf in 2009. Jillian Draper, Director of The Parlour's holding company, Drake and Morgan, confirms that a good wifi service is essential for the competitiveness of her business.

"Our customers are a broad mix of business people and leisure visitors," says Jillian, "but they all expect to get wifi. Young mums, senior business people, even elderly couples – they come in with tablets and smartphones and they want to connect easily and quickly.

"Wifi has become an integral part of our offering, at Canary Wharf and our five other locations. Once, it was a differentiator – now, it's a given that a place like The Parlour will offer good wifi. And the fact that Canary Wharf itself also offers free wifi is a bonus for us. It means more people visit the area more often."

Pioneering partnership

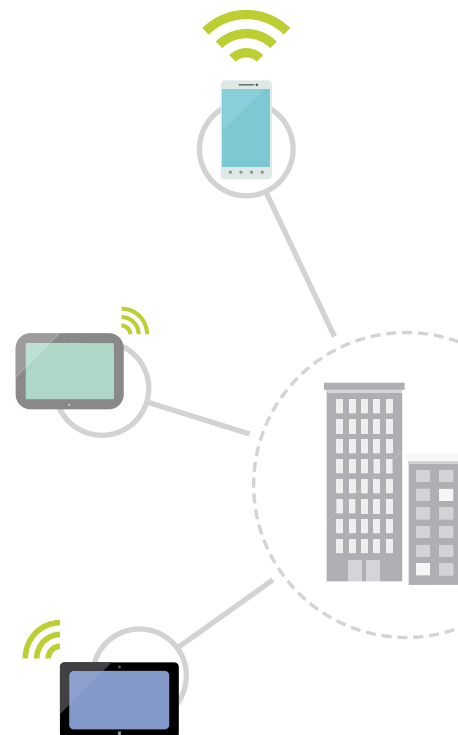
O₂ Wifi provides a free wifi connection around the entire Canary Wharf estate – users do not have to be O₂ customers to use the service. Anyone who has connected to O₂ Wifi in any other location is automatically connected when they arrive in the Canary Wharf coverage area.

"One of the reasons we chose O₂ Wifi was because they clearly had the know-how and technical expertise to get easy, reliable wifi across a site like Canary Wharf," says Eric. "It's a complex site, and we needed coverage both indoors and outside.

"But the real difference we found when working with O₂ was the amount of time they spent around the table with us discussing how we would work together in partnership. They were just as committed as we were to exploring ways of using the wifi to enrich the lives of the people here.

"We're looking at how wifi can support things like a better retail experience, or a better living experience. It's pioneering work and it shows us that they're thinking about the longer-term possibilities. For us, O₂ Wifi is one of the fundamental building blocks for our vision of the smart city of the future."

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We'd love to hear from you. To find out more about how O₂ can help your business, just contact your Account Manager or call on 01235 433 507.

You can also visit o2.co.uk/enterprise and o2wifi.co.uk

