

Martha Flora

New Network Allows New Independence for Dutch Care Center Residents

Customer at a glance


Customer Name

Martha Flora


Industry

Healthcare


Country

The Netherlands



Customer Background

Martha Flora provides specialized care for people with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Established in 2014, the care center now has 13 locations nationwide, together housing more than 250 studio apartments. These living environments are specially designed for the needs of its residents; in fact, what makes Martha Flora unique is that it strives to give residents as much control over their own lives as possible. And further expansion is on the horizon, with at least six more locations to be added in the next two years.

MARTHA FLORA

"The extra attention Zyxel Networks gives through calls and roundtable discussions is greatly appreciated. Zyxel Networks is exactly the kind of manufacturer you want to see, as it thinks along with the end customer – it's not just concerned with selling products and moving on."

Mark Steenman
Founder, Stemere ICT

Summary

The Martha Flora care center takes a modern approach to caring for those with dementia, giving its residents the support they need to live with relative independence. Central to this experience is reliable TV, internet, and phone service, ensuring that residents – all of whom have their own devices – can enjoy entertainment and communicate with loved ones at any time. For this, strong and reliable internet connectivity is indispensable. However, with the numbers of residents at its centers growing and with new centers in the works, Martha Flora's existing network was buckling under the pressure. For instance, the network could not handle speeds of 500 Mbps or more, which are now the norm and necessary for streaming and video calls. There were also no security gateways or firewalls, raising serious cybersecurity concerns. Furthermore, some care centers had a guest network while others did not.

Eyeing a network overhaul to put in place stronger infrastructure that was also futureproof and easier to manage, Martha Flora turned to integration partner Stemere, a Zyxel Networks Gold Partner with rich experience in hospitality, real estate, and healthcare. The plan: to together design and deploy the new network, and have Stemere ICT take over management of the network. An initial look at the current state of the care centers' locations was eye-opening, according to Stemere founder Mark Steenman. "In the early stages, their nursing homes had their own standalone networks, equipment and IT specialists. For Martha Flora, it was like a wasps nest." He recalls: "We first reorganized and standardized the networks, taking out all the overhead." Then came the central distribution of internet, TV, and phone service to the over 250 resident studios at the various Martha Flora locations. To do so, Stemere went with Zyxel's Nebula cloud networking solution, which consists of everything needed to meet the customer's specific requirements: security gateways, access points, and network switches.

"As far as we were concerned, Zyxel Networks came up with the Nebula solution just in time," Steenman says. "Its new Zyxel gateway variant is three times as fast and for the same price. We also installed 450 access points to replace most of the existing ones to improve the WiFi services at the sites." Outside of product performance, Steenman points to customer service as a key reason that his company works exclusively with Zyxel Networks.

Challenges

- Transmission speed problems hindered high-speed internet services
- Lack of security gateways or firewalls led to insecure network
- Network was not unified, affecting connectivity quality and causing management problems

Benefits

- Seamless high-speed network services support continuous connectivity for large numbers of connected devices and allow for future expansion
- Robust cybersecurity protection for all connected devices as well as guest and office networks
- Easier, centralized network management saves time and costs for IT staff

Products used

- NWA110AX 802.11ax Access Point
- WAC6502D-S/WAC5302D-S 802.11ac Access Point
- USG FLEX 200 UTM Firewall
- NSG200 Nebula Security Gateway
- GS1920-24/48HP-v2 Smart Managed Switch

"Zyxel Networks is distinctive in how closely they work with partners and how timely their support is. You can call the support center in Germany directly or your personal account manager in the Netherlands; either way, you'll get a response that's fast and genuinely helpful, moving things forward." In addition to Zyxel's price-to-performance ratio, Steenman is also enthusiastic about the after-sales service. "On the odd occasion that there is a faulty product, there is no hassle or red tape – a new product is sent straight away," he says. "And because Zyxel Networks works with lifetime warranties, there are never any complaints. This is especially nice for us now since Martha Flora has outsourced all of its network management to us." Replacing the old system, which was a hodgepodge of different brands' equipment, invariably involved some downtime. In these cases, Steenman says, "the major challenge was having the network up and running again as quickly as possible, as the care of the residents is dependent on it."

"Zyxel Nebula solution helped us to prepare and roll out the new network in phases so there was as little downtime as possible," he continues. "It also allowed us to duplicate the installation from one site to the others without building the infrastructure from the ground up all over again." The straightforward and easy-to-deploy hardware design of the Zyxel components also proved pivotal, and made working with the project contractor a breeze for Steenman. "This had enormous cost and time savings. It's very reassuring to know that the new installations in new locations will be able to be completed within the timeframe."



Nebula's remote network management provides more flexibility and immediately alerts IT managers if a problem is detected. Steenman explains: "We run it with only six people. This translates into an affordable service price, which lets us offer enterprise-level solutions that are not normally available to SMBs." With the new-look networks, residents are now connecting their own TVs, tablets, and phones through high-speed connections, distributed via smart managed switches. "This kind of bring-your-own-device model makes residents feel right at home and keeps them in control of their own lives," Steenman says.

At each facility now, up to 50 caregivers and staff can enjoy seamless connectivity when roaming throughout each facility. In the coming years, Stemere will connect Martha Flora's new locations using Nebula-family products. "Zyxel Networks is a trustworthy partner and they really take customer feedback seriously and try to act on it," Steenman says. "When I wanted a network address translation solution (NAT) for the APs to create network separation for the residents' studios, Zyxel Networks helped us realize it. It's because of service like this that we'll be sticking by them."