A passion for baking turned national success story, Al Hatab Bakery's offering spans from freshly baked goods to gourmet specialties. Located across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Al Hatab combines intercontinental cuisines and authentic national sweets, thus upholding its Saudi roots throughout its ever-expanding network. With close to 40 branches distributed across the Kingdom, which are soon being joined by a fleet of eight new locations, Al Hatab pursues its expansion in the Western region and is expected to open in Jeddah in the near future.

Yet, beyond culinary expertise, what has made this venture a success worth celebrating for the past 15 years is the operational and secure network that was put in place to reach the objectives the company set out to fulfill: grow bigger and better to provide its customers with a stellar service wherever they are located. It is this blend of rigor and passion, replicated across all its branches, that has turned Al Hatab into the companion and bakery of choice for so many Saudi families, providing them with new delightful experiences and old tastes they have come to know and love with every visit.

Customer Satisfaction Through Performance and Resilience

Despite its diverse portfolio of products and services, Al Hatab Bakery embarks on every new venture with the same commitment to put customers first in everything it does; a value that lies at the core of the group's principles. Consequently, determining the effect of new innovations and investments on the customers' experience and satisfaction constitutes a key criterion when measuring the success of these new initiatives.

For Ahmed Taher, IT manager at Al Hatab Bakery, one clear way to support the company's ambitious expansion plans while improving customer satisfaction was to increase the performance and resilience of the IT and security infrastructure. By simultaneously reducing the likelihood of service disruption or network failure due to cyberattacks and accelerating the delivery of data and services across the network, Taher realized there was an opportunity to both enhance customer experience and reduce cost.

“Once we started comparing products, it was very clear that in terms of price-performance, integration, and breadth of function, Fortinet was significantly ahead of the competition.”

– Ahmed Taher, IT Manager, Al Hatab Bakery

Details

Customer: Al Hatab Bakery
Industry: Retail
Location: Saudi Arabia

Business Impact

- Increased customer satisfaction by 30%
- Reduced total cost of ownership (TCO) by 30%
- Saved 50% on administrative time and resources
- Enhanced resilience from both attack and network failure
- Increased security, control, and visibility of global applications and data
Al Hatab Bakery operates a range of software and cloud services for functions such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), point of sale (POS), and attendance tracking. These services include SAP S/4HANA and Microsoft Azure cloud-based services. However, as the number of retail outlets continues to grow, maintaining control and visibility without compromising performance, reliability, or security was a great challenge.

**Digital Transformation at the WAN Edge**

In order to simplify and streamline these operations, Al Hatab decided on a software-defined wide-area networking (SD-WAN) approach in which traditional backhaul links based on technologies such as multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) are replaced with local internet access at each branch. Then, by using software features such as application awareness and dynamic path selection, it could easily achieve improved performance and lower operating costs.

However, from a security standpoint, the potential attack surface increases with the migration to SD-WAN due to direct internet connections. Since the vast majority of SD-WAN solutions available on the market do not feature integrated security, additional devices must often be purchased to plug this gap, increasing both cost and complexity. To avoid this trade-off, Al Hatab needed a new approach to SD-WAN.

**Reducing TCO and Complexity With Fortinet SD-Branch**

After an extensive evaluation of competing solutions, Taher and the team chose Fortinet. "Once we started comparing products," he comments, "It was very clear that in terms of price-performance, integration, and breadth of function, Fortinet was significantly ahead of the competition."

With close support from the local Fortinet team, Al Hatab deployed Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, implemented through FortiGate next-generation firewalls (NGFWs). Deployed at the network edges of the 90 existing stores, the FortiGate NGFWs provide secure, high-performance connections with the company’s headquarters in Al Qassim.

Following Fortinet’s philosophy of security-driven networking, the FortiGate NGFW offers integrated SD-WAN with key features such as application steering, WAN optimization, centralized orchestration, and zero-touch deployment. The FortiGate NGFW is able to support both security and networking functions due to the world’s first dedicated SD-WAN application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC). With this security processor, Al Hatab can enable the full suite of FortiGate protection capabilities, including processor-intensive functions such as intrusion prevention, web filtering, and application control, with little or no discernable impact to application response times.

Going beyond the WAN edges and into the local branch networks themselves, Al Hatab Bakery was able to extend the FortiGate NGFW’s centralized security and control to all potential wired and wireless access points using FortiSwitch secure local-area network (LAN) switches and FortiAP access points. This combination, known as the Fortinet SD-Branch solution, covers all critical branch exposures—from the WAN edge to the wired and wireless LAN edge—and simplifies branch infrastructure management.

Al Hatab also leveraged FortiSwitch in its headquarters to consolidate LAN connectivity under the same security and management umbrella. To monitor and control the entire security-driven networking infrastructure, Taher and his staff use FortiManager, Fortinet’s single-pane-of-glass management console, and FortiAnalyzer, which provides deeper insight into advanced threats through correlation as well as automated response and logging.
“Not only did the level of integration across Fortinet’s SD-Branch solution reduce the total number of devices we needed, but it also cut the amount of time we had to spend managing it all,” explains Taher. “The net result was a reduction in TCO of around 30% and at least a 50% decrease of the time we had to allocate to administrative tasks.”

**Seamless Defense in Depth With the Fortinet Security Fabric**

As it strives to protect its evolving organization, Al Hatab is looking to the Fortinet Security Fabric for an even greater depth of security. It is deploying the FortiClient Enterprise Management Server (EMS) with FortiClient endpoint protection on both client devices and servers, locking down visibility and control of software and hardware inventory and helping identify vulnerable or compromised hosts by tracking the details of systems and user profiles across the entire attack surface.

Al Hatab is also extending the Security Fabric to its voice communications with FortiVoice Enterprise phone systems and FortiFone IP phones.

All of the solutions described here are seamlessly integrated as part of the Security Fabric. They are also updated with the latest threat intelligence from FortiGuard Labs, which provides some of the industry’s highest levels of protection against known threats.

To increase protection against unknown threats and some of the more persistent advanced targeted attacks, the group is now looking into deploying FortiSandbox. With its artificial intelligence (AI)-powered malware analysis, advanced reporting, and investigative tools as well as automated breach protection, FortiSandbox will provide a valuable additional layer of defense for Al Hatab Bakery, ensuring that customers continue to experience its products and services with the highest possible levels of satisfaction.