



CASE STUDY

Salvador City Hall Offers Free, Secure Wi-Fi to Thousands of People



Brazil's original capital and fourth biggest city, Salvador, is known for its colonial Portuguese architecture and Afro-Brazilian heritage, as well as for its breathtaking coastline, the hospitality of its people, and the largest street festival on the planet: the Bahian Carnival. Boasting a historically prominent position on the national scene, the city government has always closely connected the development of technologies with smart and sustainable urban management, especially relating to cultural activities.

In 1986, Salvador City Hall created COGEL (Companhia de Governança Eletrônica de Salvador) to provide innovative solutions in information technology and communication and ensure consistent quality of service to Salvador citizens. Among other responsibilities, COGEL works on the design, implementation, coordination, and supervision of technology and communication initiatives.

Digital Innovation for Social and Economic Inclusion

Every summer, thousands of tourists flock to Salvador to enjoy its gorgeous natural attractions and its world-renowned festivities, namely its six-day Carnival. This massive influx of visitors means the city's administration must respond quickly to increased infrastructural needs.

"We had been noticing a change in the tourists' and our citizens' behaviors," explains Cláudio Maltez, COGEL's Technical Director. "At first, Carnival revelers would just be dancing and having fun. But as of 2015, people were beginning to use their cell phones to take selfies or capture live streams of their favorite shows." The number of people using smartphones during the festivities was increasing every year, as were the images of Salvador circulating around the world. "We realized the need—and the opportunity—of promoting Salvador in a better way," Maltez adds.

In 2017, Salvador embarked on a major digital innovation (DI) initiative called "Conecta Salvador." COGEL teamed with Fortinet to offer free and secure Wi-Fi connectivity at Carnival parties throughout the city's main neighborhoods. Fortinet's local partner, TeleData, implemented the project. Since then, the service has been expanding every year, and is now available for most of Salvador's attractions and popular events, such as "Virada" (New Year Festival), "Yemanjá," and "Lavagem do Bonfim." In 2019, it reached a peak of over 6,000 simultaneous connections during the Carnival festivities, with 80 access points in 15 different locations. By 2020, more than 80,000 people were enjoying free and safe Wi-Fi via 100 FortiAP access points placed in 20 areas.

"We were looking for a solid solution, and Fortinet helped us greatly. What used to be a vision is now a reality. Every year we provide more access points to offer free Wi-Fi to journalists, city hall workers, tourists, and street vendors, and the traffic doubles every year."

— Cláudio Maltez,
Technical Director, COGEL

Details

Customer: Salvador City Hall

Industry: Government

Location: Brazil

Business Impact

- Strengthened Salvador's image and reputation by supporting tourism, its main source of income
- Promoted social and economic inclusion by offering free Wi-Fi to workers at the city's festivities and tourist attractions
- Achieved scalability and flexibility with an inherently secure Wi-Fi solution
- Secured Wi-Fi connections in most of Salvador's main neighborhoods

But “Conecta Salvador” is more than Wi-Fi access, emphasizes Maltez. “Connecting people was just the first move,” he says. “We realized that besides encouraging tourism and working to improve the city’s image through the thousands of photos and videos broadcast by tourists and revelers, we could also boost the local economy.” The free Wi-Fi connection facilitates the work of taxi drivers, street vendors, and local shops. “We have entire families who depend on those lines of business,” Maltez stresses. “They use our Wi-Fi to coordinate their processes and respond to the audience’s demand. Our Wi-Fi helps increase their sales and improve their level of service.”

Access points were also installed in the less populated areas, so that people could be safe to use their smartphones. “Logistics are always challenging. But Fortinet has helped us with a robust solution that allows better traffic flow,” reveals Alberto Braga, COGEL’s President.

Connectivity and Security: The Perfect Match to Get People Involved

With its citizens and visitors sharing so much data with the rest of the world, COGEL knew that security was the key element to any successful connectivity project. “Security was a primary concern from the outset,” Maltez says. “This is where Fortinet made the difference, as security is intrinsic to their solutions.” The Fortinet secure access solution provided scalability and flexibility, with a secure-by-design Wi-Fi solution at an infrastructural level. Fortinet FortiAP Access Points utilize a proprietary protocol called FortiLink that allows them to be managed directly by the FortiGate next-generation firewall (NGFW) appliance. This makes it far easier to configure FortiAP access points, and the IT team has less to learn and manage.

COGEL manages the Fortinet secure access solution from its data center, using the Fortinet Fabric Management Center, comprised of FortiManager centralized management and FortiAnalyzer logging and analytics. FortiAuthenticator identity and access management further strengthens security by ensuring only the right person can access the wireless network.

“Our technical people love [the Fortinet secure access solution],” Maltez continues, “because it is very simple in terms of settings—there is no need to deal with two or three different systems. We feel very comfortable and safe. Fortinet’s solution meets our teams’ and our tourists’ high level of demand.”

Empowered for the Future

After four years of effective and reliable connection, “Conecta Salvador” has become the main connectivity solution for people enjoying the city’s attractions. “This has been the third New Year’s Eve Festival, and what used to be a vision is now a reality. Every year, we install more access points to offer free Wi-Fi to journalists, city hall workers, party-goers, tourists, and street vendors, and the traffic doubles every year,” observes Maltez.

COGEL is considering expanding its Wi-Fi network to even more tourist areas and public squares. They also aim to launch a new security and connectivity project, using software-defined wide-area networking (SD-WAN) and Wi-Fi-as-a-Service.

Solutions

- FortiGate
- FortiManager
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiAuthenticator
- FortiAP

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