

CASE STUDY



OVERVIEW:

Located in Pakistan, the Hashoo Group is a premium conglomerate which owns and operates the Pearl Continental Hotels and Marriott Hotels brands in all major cities in the country.

WHAT THEY NEEDED:

- An easy to manage network with training and system engineer support in-country
- Increased density capabilities and overall throughput to improve guests' Wi-Fi experiences
- Reduction in guest complaints about Wi-Fi network connections
- Improved staff communications via Wi-Fi services such as Skype for Business

SOLUTION:

Deployed:

- 2 ZoneDirector 5000
- 4 ZoneDirector 3000
- 3 ZoneDirector 1200
- 315 ZoneFlex R500
- 66 ZoneFlex R600
- 1,556 ZoneFlex H500
- 17 ZoneFlex T300 Series

BENEFITS:

- Reduced Wi-Fi signal interference for guest wireless connections and employee communications
- 24/7 local support and training for improved management of the wireless network
- Scope to improve in-room experiences further in the future
- 60 guest complaints a day reduced to zero
- Guest satisfaction reaching 5 out of 5 Wi-Fi experience surveys

ENHANCING GUEST EXPERIENCE WITH RELIABLE WI-FI

The hospitality industry in Pakistan is growing at a fast pace with the average rate of occupancy for 2016 now at 80% compared with 35% in 2015. An increase in trade across the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in particular means there's more of an influx of business travellers to Pakistan on top of domestic guests who all expect the very best in wireless connectivity when working remotely, attending conferences and weddings, and connecting with family and friends back home.

THE CHALLENGES

In 2014, travel and tourism investment accounted for 9.2% of total investment in GDP in Pakistan and created over 3.4 million jobs. Despite this growth opportunity, the second biggest challenge to the hospitality industry in the region is the lack of infrastructure. Hospitality organizations need to be able to serve the 15 million consumers who access the Internet through mobile phones and the 68% of these who desire Wi-Fi access.

The Hashoo Group has emerged as Pakistan's premium conglomerate with a diversified international business portfolio. At 5,000 employees strong in the hospitality industry alone, the Hashoo Group owns and operates the Pearl-Continental and Hotel One brands with a presence in all major cities in Pakistan along with Marriott franchise hotels.

Hashoo Group's nine five star hotels, covering an average of 32 m/sq per room, needed to be fitted with state-of-the-art, reliable and seamless wireless connectivity to improve guest satisfaction and communications between staff members. The challenge was that the existing infrastructure was between 20 and 30 years old with access points (APs) deployed by Aruba which could not penetrate into the individual hotel rooms. Not only this, but the legacy Wi-Fi technology simply could not cope with increased demand from more digitally savvy guests including those attending conferences and weddings, for example. This caused guests to experience slow browsing and regular disconnection from Wi-Fi, which led to up to 60 complaints a day to the hotel management and the need for IT staff to be on call 24 hours a day.

The Hashoo Group previously struggled with end-to-end support for the wireless infrastructure and guest Wi-Fi experience. They found other technology partners like Aruba that didn't offer enough on-the-ground system engineers or training for staff members in Pakistan. The previous service provider could only provide one engineer for 200 million local people meaning that any issues would not be resolved straight away, leaving guests extremely dissatisfied.

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THE SOLUTION

After an extensive review of vendors Cisco, Aruba, Meru, Huawei and Ruckus, Ruckus Wireless was selected for its leadership in smart wireless technology. On a local level, value-added reseller, CommStar, was chosen as a partner in cabling, switching and deployment. CommStar trained 8–9 staff at Hashoo Group and had technical support staff all over the country. They offered effective pre-sales support and understood the configurations which ensured no time was lost exploring dead-end solutions. Following a thorough survey of the network infrastructure, the installation began with two key hotels: the Pearl Continental in Bhurban with 190 rooms and the Marriott in Karachi with 217 suites. This was followed by a roll out in the Hashoo Group corporate office with nearly 300 employees and two of the owner's villas—one in Islamabad and one in Dubai.

Close to 2,000 Ruckus Wireless APs were deployed over six days within a wider three-month project to rejuvenate the entire network infrastructure. The ZoneFlex R500 and ZoneFlex R600 delivers high-performance, reliable 802.11ac wireless networking at a competitive price point, which is ideal for medium density hotspot environments like the Hashoo Group hotels. The ZoneFlex H500 integrates 2.4GHz and 5GHZ concurrent radios with a pass-through feature for devices such as digital phones, which is ideal for managers roaming the hotels to communicate effectively with staff. For security, the ZoneDirector 3000 creates a highly-secure wireless LAN (WLAN), generating high network availability while authorizing user information. To improve outdoor wireless connectivity, the ZoneFlex T300 Series was also deployed.

Ruckus' patented BeamFlex adaptive antenna technology enables the wireless system to continually sense and optimize signals within the hospitality environment. This mitigates radio interference and noise to improve application flows which significantly increases performance and range. On the backend, the APs are managed by the Ruckus ZoneDirector (ZD). The ZoneDirector helps to deliver an optimal wireless experience allowing up to 25,000 clients per access point and is easy to manage.

"The Ruckus Wireless smart Wi-Fi products service 5500 guests at any one time, enabling wireless signals to penetrate into individual hotel rooms and provide crystal clear video and voice communications for both staff and guests. We can now all enjoy a seamless wireless experience. The partnership with Ruckus Wireless and ComStar has been absolutely critical to achieving this, and over and above the best-in-class smart Wi-Fi solutions, the support from Ruckus Wireless has been fantastic. Awesome, in fact!" explained Colin Fox.

With the Ruckus Wireless deployment, hotel management went from receiving up to 60 complaints a day about Wi-Fi connections to **zero**.

"We have seen a doubling of guest sentiment scores almost overnight once the new system was deployed. Guests are consistently rating the WI-FI experience as 5 out of 5, a significant improvement. Happy guests equal happy staff that can spend more time delighting our guests rather than handling complain," concludes Fox.