

CASE STUDY



OVERVIEW

The Mandarin Oriental is a chain of premier business hotels, designed for corporate and high-end guests. The Mandarin Oriental currently has 29 properties, stretching across North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In order to fully service the needs of its guests, the company needed to ensure that the quality of its Wi-Fi was as high as its other guest services.

REQUIREMENTS

- Fast, secure connections to meet the expectations of high-end guests
- Reliable, secure coverage across the hotel
- Ability to run staff applications such as POS and incident reporting
- Support for up to six devices per guest

SOLUTION

- Deployed a range of different Ruckus equipment across the hotel network, including Wave 2 802.11ac access points, and Virtual SmartZone™ Controllers

BENEFITS

- Enabled further guest services such as mobile check-in
- Supported a superior guest Wi-Fi experience
- Improved rapid management response
- Secured a fast and reliable network

FIRST-CLASS WI-FI FOR FIRST-CLASS HOTEL

The Mandarin Oriental is designed to cater for the needs of senior business and luxury leisure travellers. The hotel aims to make its guests feel at home as soon as they walk into reception. That means offering them every service that they may have at their fingertips in their own homes, including fast, secure and reliable Wi-Fi to support every device that they might care to use during their stay.

To meet this expectation, Mandarin Oriental needed a Wi-Fi solution to support heavy Internet use, such as video calling and gaming, and had to ensure that there were no coverage black spots anywhere in the hotel. Moreover, the hotel needed to run a range of corporate applications across the same network, such as Point of Sale (POS) systems and mobile check-in, and provide connectivity to public spaces such as meeting rooms, ballrooms and, of course, the hotel reception.

THE CHALLENGES

Given Mandarin Oriental's target market, guests expect easy internet access and exceptional speeds. The hotel had been providing Wi-Fi for guests for over ten years, originally choosing a consumer solution to provide connectivity. However, this did not deliver the stability and reliability expected of it, so the Mandarin Oriental turned to an enterprise solution. While this worked well, they found that the costs were too high and that the solution was rather over-engineered.

"We wanted to replicate what our guests can do at home in our guest rooms. Providing guests with world-class Internet services within our hotels was vital in the development of our brand. We want our guests to have access to the latest Wi-Fi technology, and not settle for legacy technology," said Raju Daryanani, vice president of IT Infrastructure & Information Security at Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group.

In Mandarin Oriental hotels, 99% of guests use wireless and often bring five or six devices each. In a typical hotel consisting of 150 rooms, 300-400 devices are likely to be connected at any one time.

These devices conventionally include smart-phones, tablets and laptops, and in some cases, guests also bring with them devices such as Apple TVs in order to stream personal TV or video content into the rooms. Consumer services such as Skype and Facetime are also becoming standard for all guests across the hotels as video messaging becomes the new norm.

"One of the key challenges we faced was ensuring there were no connectivity voids or black spots throughout the entire hotel," continued Daryanani. "We pride ourselves that there is not a single corner of our properties without comprehensive Wi-Fi coverage. When we draw up our coverage maps in key public areas we look at the required capacity of the space and deploy enough access points to handle more than two times the average number of devices. This provides our guests with superior quality of coverage and speeds that are not matched anywhere else in the world."

Different hotels also present their own unique challenges for access point deployment, whether due to a unique floor-pattern or extensive outdoor areas. These challenges are exemplified in the Mandarin Oriental Bali resort which is currently under construction, incorporating open air, poolside and beach locations, all requiring flawless Wi-Fi coverage.



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BONG VALDEZ

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group's VP of Technology in Asia

Ease of management and support for hotel IT is also central to the Mandarin Oriental's ability to run a high-performance, reliable service. With technological requirements constantly evolving, continual cooperation is required between the hotel IT staff and the Wi-Fi provider in order to make sure that all devices that guests may bring, and all technologies available to the hotel, are supported with adequate connection speeds.

THE SOLUTION

In the past, the company picked connectivity solutions which were either complex and expensive, or which suffered interference or black-spots throughout the hotel.

Bong Valdez, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group's VP of Technology in Asia, knows the problems well. “We've been providing high quality Wi-Fi in guests' rooms for about 12 years now,” he commented, “and to begin with, we picked consumer connectivity solutions. But it quickly became clear that they were going to give us reliability and stability issues, so we moved to an enterprise solution. The first one we worked with was rather over-engineered. The focus was on security, rather than openness and ease of connectivity, which is what we required. We're lucky we found Ruckus!”

Encountering Ruckus Wireless at a hotel technology trade show some years ago, Mandarin Oriental were interested in the different approach that Ruckus took to providing high-end Wi-Fi. They were impressed that Ruckus' local Managing Director took the time to be involved with their project and develop lasting relationships with the company.

Working through a range of local resellers, Ruckus deployed a range of key hardware into Mandarin Oriental hotels around the world, including Virtual SmartZone™ Controllers, and 802.11ac Wave 2 access points. These different models are all suited to specific locations, whether they be meeting rooms, guests rooms or hallways.

Installing Ruckus access points has allowed Mandarin Oriental to make use of Ruckus' patented BeamFlex™ and ChannelFly™ technologies. Ruckus BeamFlex monitors the environment and dynamically adjusts the signal to the best performing path, automatically steering around interference and obstacles. Ruckus ChannelFly™ technology leverages the patented principals from BeamFlex™ to learn and select the best RF channel, based on actual realizable capacity and real-time channel activity.

THE BENEFITS

Valdez said that in the hospitality industry hearing no feedback is often the best feedback possible. “Complaints about internet are one of the top three complaints in hotels globally today, but we tend to hear very few.”

Having a high-quality wireless connection has also allowed the hotel to offer guest apps such as mobile check-in, spa bookings and other hotel services. These apps allow guests to step out of their car and be escorted directly to their rooms by a staff member without having to stop at reception.

In addition, the Mandarin Oriental took advantage of the superior Wi-Fi by equipping staff with iPads and mobile phones to improve the rapid management response in the event of a guest query. For example, if a guest reports a room defect, the hotel is able to direct the nearest staff member to respond quickly and appropriately.

“We're delighted with the Wi-Fi access that the Ruckus deployments have enabled,” concluded Daryanani. “Our guests have experienced superior Wi-Fi, which ultimately means that all of us at the Mandarin Oriental have also felt the benefits.”