

Shift from Legacy Defenses to Future-Proof Security Proves Winning Strategy Against Sophisticated Phishing Attacks and Cyber Threats

INDUSTRY

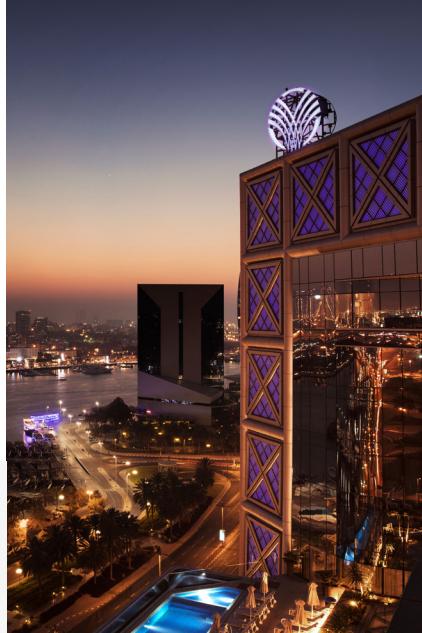
Hospitality

HEADQUARTERS

Abu Dhabi

COMPANY SIZE

11,000 employees



OVERVIEW

Rotana is one of the region's leading hospitality companies, founded in Abu Dhabi in 1992. It manages a portfolio of over 116 properties in operation and under development across the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Türkiye. Known for its commitment to quality and guest satisfaction, Rotana operates six distinct brands: Rotana Hotels & Resorts, Centro Hotels, Rayhaan Hotels & Resorts, Arjaan Hotel Apartments, Edge by Rotana, and The Residences by Rotana.

OUR SOLUTION



Harmony
Email & Collaboration

As a member of the Global Hotel Alliance (GHA), Rotana is part of the GHA DISCOVERY loyalty program—one of the world's largest for independent hotel brands—offering guests exclusive benefits at more than 900 hotels in nearly 100 countries. With its brand promise of 'Treasured Time', Rotana continues to expand its presence across key markets while delivering trusted hospitality experiences.



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Biju Dharmaraj Corporate Director of Information Security & Compliance at Rotana



CHALLENGE

Facing rapidly evolving cyber security threats that increasingly target the hospitality industry, rising regulatory demands, operational complexity, and a need to transform itself digitally, Rotana Hotel Management Corporation wanted to find more effective ways to secure itself against attacks and maintain regulatory compliance without disrupting worker productivity.

Like nearly every company in the hospitality industry, Rotana found itself targeted daily by exploits and phishing attacks, carried out by threat actors hoping to extract valuable guest data and disrupt critical business operations through ransomware extortions. To succeed, the IT security team, led by Biju Dharmaraj, Corporate Director of Information Security & Compliance, needed to overcome several security pain points to reach their goals.

As threat actors craft sophisticated phishing campaigns tailored to exploit hospitality staff, the Rotana security and infrastructure team noticed that phishing attempts were not only more frequent but also increasingly nuanced and compelling. Attackers have even impersonated guests and partners, making their exploitative phishing attacks even harder to detect.

Rotana's legacy email security defenses began to fall behind in their ability to defend against modern threats. They were also causing more work than necessary for security team members, including routine security incident management, with multiple levels of escalation, an increased number of support tickets, and significant manual intervention by both users and IT staff. This inefficiency diverted valuable security resources and time away from more strategic efforts.

Rotana also faced a rapidly evolving compliance landscape, including regional Middle Eastern standards. These standards are in addition to the need to comply with regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and to protect personally identifiable information (PII). The Rotana team needed security and compliance frameworks and tools to enable auditable security controls and operations.

With Rotana's ongoing digital transformation initiatives, the IT team required security defenses that would scale as the organization expanded, integrate with modern collaboration platforms like SharePoint, and prepare the company for future technological shifts, including the evolving role of AI in cybersecurity.

Finally, Rotana's security and technical teams wanted to provide employees with security protections that did not disrupt their workflows, unlike their legacy systems, which created friction and increased support queries, leading to occasional user dissatisfaction.

To address these needs, Rotana began searching for a comprehensive email and collaboration platform.

SOLUTION

After a thorough evaluation and a proof-of-concept comparison with other vendors, Rotana selected Harmony Email & Collaboration. The platform rollout covered over 4,000 seats across their organization. “Our Harmony Email & Collaboration deployment went very smoothly. We received strong support from Checkpoint and experienced seamless technical implementation. We ran Harmony Email & Collaboration in parallel with existing systems for about a month to ensure a seamless transition,” Dharmaraj said.

To address regulatory and data protection requirements, the team implemented Data Loss Prevention (DLP) policies that restricted the sharing of critical information. These policies were configured to prevent unauthorized data flows and bolster compliance postures. Integration with SharePoint ensured that both communication and collaboration channels were secured.

Harmony Email & Collaboration management improvements would enable users to self-resolve common issues via administrative folders, reducing the need for IT intervention. And recognizing the importance of user participation in cybersecurity, Rotana’s team conducted awareness campaigns and provided educational content.

“This approach helped users understand the benefits, adapt to the changes more easily, and minimize resistance during the transition—contributing to a smooth and successful rollout across the organization,” Dharmaraj said.

The organization began exploring the incorporation of AI-driven security tools and assessed further enhancements in account infrastructure security and operational integrations. “We want to leverage AI for both immediate and strategic advantages and position ourselves to take advantage of how AI is increasing security effectiveness and efficiency,” Dharmaraj said.

This strategy will future proof their security investment amid an evolving threat landscape; however, the team has already seen immediate benefits from their decision to deploy Harmony Email & Collaboration.

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Biju Dharmaraj, Corporate Director of Information Security & Compliance at Rotana

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OUTCOME

After deployment, Rotana observed a drastic drop in phishing incidents - blocking approximately 50% more phishing and unwanted promotional emails compared to previous security toolsets. The capability to stem both direct threats and distracting promotions enhanced overall inbox hygiene. "This was a substantial improvement," Dharmaraj said.

Ticket volumes decreased, and administrative processes became more efficient, freeing up the IT team to focus on higher-value activities. The streamlined ticketing reduced manual work, improved team morale, and accelerated incident resolution. "Our people reported fewer complaints, and security related interactions between departments were significantly curtailed — all due to the process improvements from the Harmony deployment," Dharmaraj said.

"Our compliance posture improved thanks to DLP enforcement and transparent, trackable approval workflows for any externally published material. Auditors and executives alike expressed satisfaction, and the new system facilitated easier compliance with GDPR and related regulations," he said.

User training and the ease of use of Harmony Email & Collaboration led to considerable positive feedback from frontline staff. Employees who are now better equipped to identify threats have become active participants in the organization's defense. "Administrative processes became more efficient, freeing up the IT team to focus on higher-value activities," Dharmaraj added. The solution's flexibility and extensibility enabled Rotana to position itself better to support its ongoing digital transformation, integrate new platforms, and explore future innovations in AI-driven security.

Rotana's journey demonstrates the importance of a holistic, user-centric, and forward-looking approach to cybersecurity in the hospitality industry. By choosing a robust security platform and investing in both process and people, they have measurably reduced risk, improved operations, and laid the groundwork for future resilience.

About Check Point Software Technologies Ltd.

Check Point Software Technologies Ltd. (www.checkpoint.com) is a leading protector of digital trust, utilizing AI-powered cyber security solutions to safeguard over 100,000 organizations globally. Through its Infinity Platform and an open garden ecosystem, Check Point's prevention-first approach delivers industry-leading security efficacy while reducing risk. Employing a hybrid mesh network architecture with SASE at its core, the Infinity Platform unifies the management of on-premises, cloud, and workspace environments to offer flexibility, simplicity and scale for enterprises and service providers.

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