

CASE STUDY

Paraguayan Business Group Securely Connects Its More than 90 Remote Sites, Saving 35% on Connectivity Costs

Grupo Chacomer, with seven companies, more than 90 subsidiaries, and 2,400 employees nationwide, is a business group with 70 years of operations in Paraguay. Chacomer offers a diverse range of products at wholesale and retail levels, including vehicle sales (cars, motorcycles, trucks), tools, household equipment, apparel, automotive and motorcycle accessories, and machinery. The organization operates with strong principles, high-performance teams, quality, and excellence, which have enabled it to transform a family business into a company with transnational reach. In Paraguay, Chacomer represents global brands, including Kenton, Yamaha, Suzuki, Husqvarna, Electrolux, Scott, Elf, and Kumho, among many others. It also operates a motorcycle assembly plant, a utility truck assembly plant, and a food and chemical production plant.

Connectivity and security are vital factors for the optimal functioning of Chacomer's operations. "Security is a critical component in building business confidence. Moreover, the performance and availability of communications are crucial for our customers and partners," shares Marcelo Mangiacavalli, Chief Information Officer at Grupo Chacomer.

In early 2023, Chacomer embarked on a digital evolution strategy by adopting processes, methodologies, and technologies to enhance business operations and profitability. This initiative began as a response to the increasing adoption of cloud-based solutions, the geographic dispersion of the organization's sites, and how customers use technology to interact with the business. Ultimately, the company wanted to tackle the challenges of managing high volumes of information generated by various security systems, infrastructure, and equipment.

Chacomer found that the Fortinet Security Fabric offered an integrated ecosystem of solutions addressing quality, performance, and stability issues in its communications networks. The group was supported throughout the process by a local Fortinet partner, Advanced Solutions, who handled the initial engineering, network architecture definitions, and implementation. Additionally, Fortinet partners Vivion and Emotion supplied the equipment and managed part of implementing wireless solutions and integrating with existing platforms.

Core-Driven Security

In its technological modernization process, Chacomer focused on three aspects: security and network optimization for the primary data center, secure and available connectivity for all its locations, and wireless connectivity in the logistics centers.



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Marcelo Mangiacavalli
Chief Information Officer,
Grupo Chacomer

Details

Customer: Grupo Chacomer

Industry: Retail

Location: Paraguay

Number of Secure SD-WAN

Locations: 90

Business Impact

- Network availability reached 99.99%, enabling uninterrupted operations across 90 remote sites
- 35% savings on connectivity costs by replacing expensive MPLS links and complementary services
- Management time and effort saved by increased centralization and automation of cybersecurity tasks

The company sought a native end-to-end solution that provides complete coverage for the entire business group. The IT team's experience with Fortinet was crucial in the decision, as they needed a robust, functional, and cost-effective solution. "The Fortinet Security Fabric provides us with a cross-platform of solutions that integrate seamlessly. We can have a centralized view of security and automation capabilities that optimize the team's work," says Mangiacavalli.

A significant focus of the implementation was the primary data center. The Ethernet switches, FortiSwitch, were deployed in redundant high availability, providing a valuable backbone of 10 to 40 Gbps. At the same time, security was reinforced with two FortiGate Next-Generation Firewalls (NGFWs). "By enhancing the protection of the data center, we can safeguard the company's most important assets: information, systems, and business continuity," emphasizes Mangiacavalli.

High Availability for a Growing Business

Having secured its infrastructure, Chacomer then focused on boosting connectivity. Before Fortinet, the organization used dedicated Internet and MPLS links to connect its 90 sites nationwide. These links needed higher speed and better quality of service, which did not justify the cost. Moreover, deployment took too long. In seven months, the company had been able to deploy links to only 30% of its sites.

The company took advantage of the Fortinet Security Fabric platform by deploying one FortiGate NGFW at each location to address this issue. The hybrid mesh firewalls created an integrated network that enables centralized and transparent connectivity management. With the Fortinet Secure SD-WAN enablement built on the NGFWs, Chacomer achieved high availability and performance across all its sites nationwide. In addition, the group replaced the MPLS connections with regular broadband links, offering significantly higher capacity at a much lower cost. As a result, it is estimated to achieve savings of nearly 35% in connectivity costs while also increasing network availability to 99.99% at most locations.

With the more affordable links integrated into the Fortinet Secure SD-WAN solution, Chacomer deployed a secure model allowing two internet links from different providers per site, increasing network availability and responsiveness. The Fortinet solution ensures constant communication by automatically managing the links; in a failure, priority is always given to the functional link. "Today, we have no record of incidents, failures, or downtime related to the equipment or its configuration, which gives us reliability and stability," mentions Mangiacavalli.

Additionally, these solutions are easy to deploy. Chacomer completed the entire implementation in just three months and can now set up a new location in less than a day. According to Mangiacavalli, this enhances the ROI and, consequently, the long-term total cost of ownership. The company estimates that the payback period will be 36 months.

Most recently, Chacomer deployed 109 FortiAPs and 13 FortiSwitches to ensure Wi-Fi coverage in the logistics centers, where wireless connectivity is critical to the company's logistics operations. Where previously the group had faced significant problems with the coverage and performance of the networks, they now experience stable wireless and wired connections. These positive outcomes led the group to continue replacing obsolete switches with FortiSwitch at other locations. Similarly, Chacomer will increase the deployment of FortiAP, having found that the equipment-to-space ratio is much better than that of different solutions on the market.

Chacomer utilizes FortiSwitches for edge interconnection and network segmentation, making them an essential component of its network ecosystem. "The seamless integration between the LAN and the WAN, including the NGFWs, the SD-WAN, the APs, and the switches into the Fortinet Security Fabric platform, favored the speed of deployment and is a significant

Business Impact(cont.)

- Enhanced network visibility to enable effective risk mitigation
- Increased return on investment (ROI) by deploying Fortinet Secure SD-WAN at new locations with minimal downtime

Solutions

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall
- Fortinet Secure SD-WAN
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAP
- FortiManager
- FortiAnalyzer

"With the Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, we have decreased downtime related to the equipment or its configuration, which gives us reliability and stability."

Marcelo Mangiacavalli
Chief Information Officer,
Grupo Chacomer

improvement to our security posture,” shares Mangiacavalli. “The Security Fabric approach generates a capillarity of security and integration we need and is the foundation for moving to the next step of zero trust.”

Unified Platform Boosts Performance

Chacomer’s architecture, based on the Fortinet platform, has allowed the organization to achieve short-term improvements in speed, stability, and performance. The group has attained greater centralization and automation of cybersecurity-related tasks through the convergence model under the Fortinet Security Fabric platform.

The organization uses FortiManager to centrally manage the entire network. This solution has consolidated the total integration and convergence of the network into a single pane of glass, enabling the group to achieve coordinated and unified protection and streamlined administration to address security issues across the organization. Chacomer estimates that this integrated visibility has resulted in more than 65% optimization of time spent on technology implementation and management tasks.

Additionally, FortiAnalyzer offers complete network reporting, enabling proactive incident prevention through advanced threat detection capabilities, centralized security analytics, and comprehensive security posture awareness and control. “By having FortiAnalyzer deployed, we collect information from all network components, like the FortiSwitches, to ensure the most robust performance and security possible,” completes Mangiacavalli.

Building Strong Value Relationships

With Fortinet, Chacomer’s IT team found more than an answer to their needs. “When we seek technology, we not only want a cost-effective solution but also an ecosystem that supports us throughout the entire lifecycle of these solutions. Fortinet has an evident approach: Their focus is not on selling products but on being an organization’s strategic ally,” says Mangiacavalli.

Looking to the future, Grupo Chacomer aims to continue optimizing connectivity resources with the Fortinet Secure SD-WAN solution. Additionally, the goal is to achieve substantial improvements in visibility and management with FortiManager and FortiAnalyzer by leveraging the multiple automation capabilities offered by the solutions.

“With Fortinet, we have found stable, scalable, and secure solutions. This allows us to focus on what truly adds value to our company. This makes Fortinet a brand we can highly recommend,” concludes Mangiacavalli.



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