kasada

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

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Companies

How Hyatt Uses Kasada to Achieve its Purpose of Care

HYATT®

Client: Hyatt
Headquarters: Chicago, Illinois
Industry: Global Hospitality
Vendor: Kasada

Overview

Hyatt's purpose is to care for people so they can be their best. As a global hospitality brand with more than 900 hotels worldwide, Hyatt chose Kasada—an online traffic integrity solution that puts control and safety back in the hands of human beings—to build on Hyatt's robust cybersecurity program and further deliver on its purpose for its guests, customers, and colleagues.

Goals

- **Stay ahead** of fast-moving, ever-changing malicious automation issues and threats by consistently identifying opportunities to maximize and consolidate technology systems

- **Create a bulwark** against unwanted and increasingly sophisticated synthetic traffic while preserving a seamless journey for guests and customers, conserving backend human and machine resources, and protecting business assets

- **Choose a mission-compatible B2B provider** and solution to actively reinforce and contribute to brand value

Business Outcomes

- **Immediately and demonstrably elevated traffic integrity**
  - Foiled unwanted traffic instantly, using evolving triage architecture
  - Reduced friction and latency for authentic end users
  - Mitigated malicious bots and replaced some WAF functionality

- **Rapidly generated bottom-line savings**
  - Delivered time-to-value under 30 minutes and rapid ROI
  - Eliminated other costly, friction-generating solutions
  - Offered versatile multi-page, multi-site protection
  - Closed gaps between existing layers of defense
  - Dramatically reduced need for manual bot mitigation
  - Staunched drain on human and machine capacity

- **Immediately produced cleaner data and reliable metrics**
  - Right-sized traffic
  - Enabled teams to capture authentic metrics
  - Enabled more accurate forecasts, directly impacting operations

- **Continuously provided immersive, holistic collaboration**
  - Enabled tech and business teams to optimize preparedness
  - Provided granular intelligence and enabled lightning-fast action
  - Offered holistic solution and integrated, immersive service model

About Hyatt

A global hospitality enterprise with 20 premier brands and more than 900 hotel and resort properties in 65 countries across six continents, Hyatt's purpose—"to care for people so they can be their best"—informs every business decision it makes, including its technology investments. Hyatt is known for its commitment to operational excellence and distinct guest experiences, and its IT and digital product teams aspire to the same high caliber, working in tandem with the cybersecurity team that prides itself on "leaving no stone unturned."

Pre-empting Online Traffic Problems

In 2017, Hyatt's teams began to observe major new cyber trends and actors. As the business world was becoming predominantly digital, a massive onslaught of aggressive automated traffic was encroaching on every corner of the web. "Entire sites could be impacted by bots and scrapers," said Chief Information Security Officer Benjamin Vaughn. "It was possible for a significant portion of traffic, at any given time, to be non-human."

Hyatt was determined to stay ahead of the game, and, true to its purpose of care, ramped up its technology to ensure its systems were a bulwark without adding latency or friction to the online guest and customer experience. They relied on an interlocking series of security controls to stave off cybersecurity-related traffic issues, with manual mitigation as a back-up when necessary.

Hyatt's teams worked closely across departments to select a new, mission-compatible technology partner that understood its immediate and long-term goals.

When Hyatt conducted a proof of concept with Kasada, "…it was really eye-opening. We were so impressed with the technology that we quickly moved to implement the solution," said Vaughn.

"Information security is a board-level matter because it poses a major risk to any business," added Benjamin Weiss, Director, Product Management. "At Hyatt, we pride ourselves on putting security and privacy front and center. To deliver the great functionality and experiences that people love and expect from Hyatt, the right tools are critical and we don't wait until we are experiencing problems. We select vendors who are thought leaders, understand the digital dynamics and what's currently happening within the market. At Hyatt, it's important that we work with vendors who invest in their product over the long haul, pay close attention, and anticipate what's next in order to continuously improve their product and adapt. In the security space, challenges are constantly evolving, more so than in other spaces, and it's critical that we work with providers who really understand that."

> *At Hyatt we care deeply about what we're delivering to our guests. It's at the core of our purpose. That positive experience has to start from the very first contact, and for most people, Hyatt's digitals platforms are the first touchpoint. Companies that pride themselves on customer experience have to be looking for the best technical solutions on the market—and that is what we found in Kasada."*
>
> **— BENJAMIN WEISS**
>   Director, Product Management, In-Stay Portfolio and World of Hyatt App, Hyatt

Sharing Best Traffic Integrity Practices

Hyatt's purpose radiates beyond its own colleagues and guests—it believes in sharing best practices and successes within the retail and hospitality segments. "Information sharing is valuable for our own security program and when our segments thrive, it's good for all of us and for consumers. Hyatt has experienced tremendous benefit from Kasada's solution and it's truly helping us to fight malicious automation in the right way. I believe many retail and hospitality organizations could find similar value in this type of solution," said Vaughn.

Here, Hyatt shares insights into its challenges and explores how finding the right solution provider is critical to advancing its purpose.

Addressing Frontline Digital Product Needs

Benjamin Weiss oversees and manages Hyatt's digital "In-Stay" product teams. Charged with defining and developing optimal guest experiences, Weiss and his team focus on web, backend, and native mobile applications. His purview includes the customer journey at the public endpoints from the login experience to digital check-out.

"The end product that we're delivering is the experience that people have when they come to Hyatt, both online and when they stay with us," said Weiss. "We care deeply about what we're delivering to our guests. The most critical concern for any business is the quality of the customer experience, and, specifically in the hospitality business, the stay experience. Hands down, the top imperative for businesses that sincerely care about customer experience, as we do at Hyatt, is to take a hard look at what online options and solutions are available to protect assets and support standards and ambitions."

Locking Out Malicious Automation

Weiss noted that bots and other sorts of malicious attacks are realities that every online business has to contend with. "It's a real and visible threat, in the same way that any offline business has to be thinking about risks." Across the hospitality industry, reservation pages are one of areas most frequently targeted by malicious bots. To ensure hyatt.com pages are running smoothly and efficiently, Weiss looks to Hyatt's technology and cybersecurity teams and tools to lock out fake log-in attempts and rate-scraping.

A key Kasada differentiator, according to Weiss, is that Kasada doesn't place friction on or shift the burden over to the end user. "What we like about the Kasada platform is that it comprehensively supports us in our purpose when it comes to the guest experience. With Kasada, we're not putting friction or work on our guests when they're supposed to be experiencing something seamless, even at the moment they are just beginning to log on and plan their stay. When you block bad traffic, you want to do it in a way that is undetected by any legitimate user. That's a success story for us." said Weiss.

Right-Sizing Traffic

Another critical role Kasada plays is in the right-sizing of traffic. "The most important thing for marketers to have is authentic conversions, quality acquisitions and legitimate users who show intent and purchase—in our case, book rooms. Good marketing is less about driving traffic at any cost and more about driving quality traffic. Kasada helps us achieve that goal," Weiss observed.

Tied to the issue of traffic quality is the deleterious effect on RUM metrics when synthetic traffic isn't stopped at the lower end of the booking funnel. Bookings and sales reports as well as abandonment rates can be vastly skewed, triggering a knock-on effect on operations. With Kasada, Hyatt noted that the margin of error in metrics is normalized, enabling sales and operations to be able to forecast short and long-term with greater accuracy and confidence.

Addressing Tech, Platform Ops, and Information Security Needs

Before implementing Kasada, Hyatt used two primary lines of bot defense, among several layers of platform, to contain standard, albeit potentially damaging, issues, such as login attempts, account takeover, and credential stuffing. 2017 saw the creation of the WireX botnet, and pressures on operations reached an industry-wide peak as tech and cybersecurity teams worked to keep pace with a dramatic rise in malicious traffic at the login level as well as an enormous surge in rate-scraping attacks.
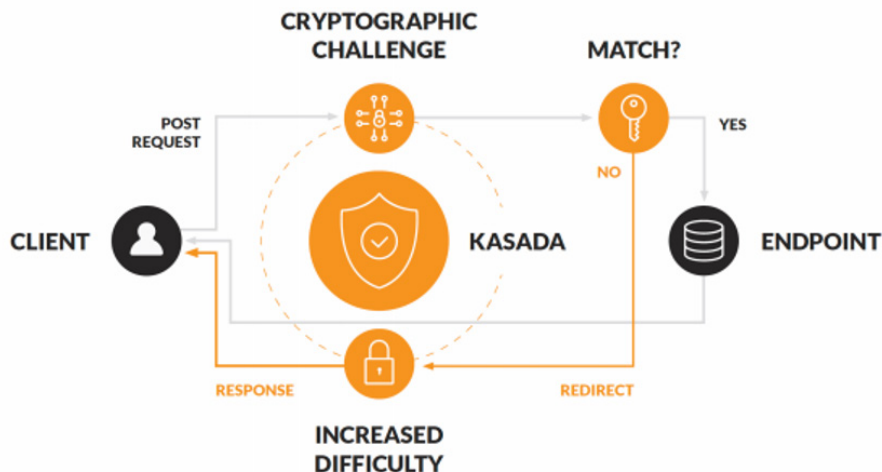

Figure 1: How Kasada Works

"Room rate data is extremely valuable information for other parties in the industry," Vaughn noted. Backend teams were having to consistently do manual work to fill in the gaps left between the existing layers of platform. Hyatt implemented numerous new protections to buoy up against these evolving threats, and they fared better than many in the segment, according to Vaughn. "But had we had Kasada at the time, we would have been able to expend less time and fewer resources achieving those protections," he said.

Jason Ayson, Director of IT, E-Commerce Technology at Hyatt concurred: "We needed solutions that could help us get ahead of the evolving threat landscape and approaches of the malicious threat actor, as well as protect us from potential attacks in the future. To get a firsthand look at Kasada's solution, we ran a POC to test its ability to produce the evolving protection it promised without requiring the level of manual intervention that our teams were used to."

Vaughn added, "We ran the POC through our search pages for specific browser user agents and were able to see the full picture of all traffic processed by Kasada, including bots. With this insight, we could see the value in Kasada right away." After this initial success on search and shop pages on hyatt.com, Hyatt extended the solution to cover additional hyatt.com pages, such as the "find your reservation," login, and check-in and check-out pages.

Hyatt also found value in Kasada's solution in that it can act as a web application firewall (WAF). "When we place Kasada in front of an endpoint, we are very confident that there won't be any bots hitting that endpoint anymore, which enables our digital team to know that the traffic stream is real guests and customers. The false positive rate is incredibly low and we now have more robust and actionable data," said Vaughn.

> *At Hyatt, we do our very best every day to protect our guests' and our colleagues' information, and we continuously evaluate strategic opportunities to strengthen our cyber defense systems. As one of our most important digital assets, it's critical that we have myriad controls and layers of protection for hyatt.com. We have a robust combination of human expertise, policies, systems, and solutions in place to protect our digital platforms—and we find Kasada to be one of our most valuable controls within our ecosystem."*

— **BENJAMIN VAUGHN**
   Vice President and Chief Information
   Security Officer, Hyatt

Modelling Accurate Capacity Growth

Hyatt also benefits from Kasada's solution in terms of its capacity growth strategy. "Every time we added capacity, it was consumed by unprofitable traffic," said Lawson Kelly, Vice President and Global Chief Technology Officer. "Kasada allowed us to slow our rate of capacity growth so that we could extend the useful life of that capacity. Instead of being consumed in three years, it is extended to five years, which defers future cost rather than lowering current cost. This enables us to model a more accurate capacity growth strategy rather than having to over-invest." In other words, according to Hyatt, Kasada enabled them to right-size authentic traffic by eliminating synthetic traffic. Kelly added, "Less synthetic traffic accelerates the ability of businesses to react because you have cleaner data, which frees up colleagues' time to work on more impactful projects rather than culling through analytics."

Across departments, the ROI from Kasada was evident and nearly immediate at both the human and machine levels. Vaughn explained, "Here's an easy way to look at ROI: an attacker

gaining access to a single guest account would be unacceptable to us. The first time Kasada prevented an account takeover event, we saw value." He added, "We see very regular updates and new features added to the product—indicating Kasada's commitment to continuous improvement—and full transparency on pricing. From a service standpoint, Kasada offers us an embedded, finely integrated support model that ensures the right actions are taken at the right time. Having their support team available to answer questions 24/7 is something very special. It's immersive and demonstrates something we highly value at Hyatt—commitment to genuine care."

Tethering Decision-Making to Mission

Now more than ever, the global economy is decidedly digital, and business is moving in parallel with automated, non-human traffic flowing at a rapid-fire pace in often elusive forms. Strategic companies such as Hyatt are proactive in observing external change and gathering the granular knowledge needed to evolve systems. In Kasada, Hyatt found a mission-compatible collaborator that offers a holistic traffic integrity solution and immersive services that give optimal support to Hyatt's dedicated teams while protecting business assets and enhancing end-user experience.

"The most valuable part of our collaboration with Kasada is being able to stay on top of the constantly evolving challenges of the digital world," Weiss concluded. "Knowing you can count on the help and support of a provider with Kasada's level of investment is an enormously valuable thing for anybody within the security space. We prioritize security, privacy, and the guest experience in everything that we do, and Kasada adds value for each of our roles and responsibilities, and enables all of us at Hyatt to further deliver on our purpose of care."

The term "Hyatt" is used in this article to refer to Hyatt Hotels Corporation and/or one or more of its affiliates.

About Kasada

Operating globally since 2015 and trusted by enterprises worldwide, Kasada gives internet control and safety back to human beings through its category-defining online traffic integrity solution. With Kasada, even the stealthiest cyber threats are foiled, from login to data scraping across web, mobile, and API channels. Scalable up to multi-billion-dollar companies, onboarded in just minutes, and designed to deliver clear ROI in multiple departments, Kasada's solution invisibly defends and enhances critical business assets while ensuring optimal online activity, with immediate and lasting online traffic security. Kasada is based in New York and Sydney, with offices in Melbourne, San Francisco, and London. For more information, visit www.kasada.io.