

# A cybersecurity assessment guides IT investments

- **Business needs** – The company needed to understand its strengths and weaknesses in protecting its network from cyberthreats.
- **Networking solution** – An AT&T cybersecurity consultation evaluated Luna Grill's security against widely accepted best practices and frameworks to help the company defend its network and data.
- **Business value** – Validation for current security posture, a roadmap for future security investments
- **Industry focus** – Restaurant
- **Size** – 52 locations

## About Luna Grill Restaurants

Luna Grill was founded in San Diego in 2004 by husband-and-wife team Sean and Maria Pourteymour to provide healthy dining options. The fast casual restaurant provides real food, crafted with care, that is always fresh and cooked to order.

## The situation

Luna Grill's IT team created a network security plan to defend against ever-evolving cyberthreats to information technology. Luna Grill wanted to ensure it had done everything possible to safeguard its digital assets.

## Solution

Luna Grill tapped AT&T Business to perform a Cybersecurity Risk Posture Assessment to help it understand security risks. AT&T also conducted a penetration test of the network and application controls that help secure the restaurant's operations and data. The consultation helped Luna Grill validate its current cybersecurity posture and make plans to ensure continuing protection for its networks and data.

## Healthy, delicious menu scores with customers

Luna Grill has made a name for itself in the fast casual dining space. Owners and founders, Sean and Maria Pourteymour, have had a lifelong passion for wholesome food. Maria, Luna Grill's Chief Cuisine Officer, learned the restaurant business working in her family's Greek restaurant. Sean, the CEO, is Persian and introduced Maria to amazing new dishes. They drew inspiration from both her childhood and Sean's culinary culture to create Mediterranean and Middle Eastern flavors for the menu.

High quality ingredients and healthy menu offerings quickly made the restaurant a hit with patrons, and the Pourteymours soon opened additional locations. Today there are 52 Luna Grills, located primarily in Southern California and the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. All the locations are company owned.

Catering has become an important aspect of Luna Grill's business. The restaurants offer individual meals, family dinners, and platters to serve small and large gatherings. Mediterranean food travels and holds well, making it a popular choice for catering. Its fresh and healthy signature plates, appetizers, wraps, salads, sides, and desserts are perfect for business and personal events.

Jack Ahrens, Luna Grill IT Director, said the founders remain actively involved in the company's operations. "Maria works with the rest of the culinary team to come up with the recipes that stay true to the tradition of Mediterranean cuisine," he said. "Sean keeps his fingers on the pulse of operations and crafts the underlying values and strategies to steer the company."

## Giving back to its communities

Luna Grill locations are always looking for ways to get involved with the communities they serve. The company invites organizations to host fundraisers in its restaurants, and Luna Grill donates a portion of the sales to the organization. In two recent years it donated \$168,735 to nonprofit groups.



Philanthropy has always been important to the company. "We've always been a local advocate for our communities, and that goes all the way back to our beginning," Ahrens said. It started with efforts to support schools and other organizations and has continued to grow as the company expanded.

Recently, during the pandemic, Luna Grill helped support frontline workers from hospitals. In addition, it ran a gift card campaign to help feed children whose school meal programs may have been canceled.

"Giving back has always been an important part of the fabric and culture of who we are," Ahrens said. "We love to give back to the people who take care of us."

The company's altruism is one of the factors that attracted Ahrens to Luna Grill. "From the way they take care of their guests to the way they reach out to the community, it's pretty outstanding," he said.

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**Jack Ahrens**  
Information Technology Director,  
Luna Grill

## Keeping its technology humming so restaurants can focus on guests

As IT Director, Ahrens is responsible for the technology at every Luna Grill Location, including point of sale and network architecture at restaurants. "My team and I are here to support our operators in the field to ensure our technology is working efficiently so they can focus on serving our guests," he said.

The team also makes certain that internet connections at each location remain strong to support online ordering, the catering call center, and other business processes. Ahrens oversees all new technology integrations.

Ahrens and his team have worked hard to design a consistent infrastructure. "We recently upgraded our network switches and performed a large conversion to standardize the entire network architecture," he said. "So although it might be slightly different depending on the number of devices at each location, the main backbone of the restaurant is going to be the same across the board."

## A wide-angle lens on security

Security is a topic that Luna Grill's IT team takes very seriously. "Security is something that's always front and center, particularly when you're dealing with sensitive information," Ahrens said.

Like all restaurants, Luna Grill must be compliant with the stringent Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standard to safeguard credit card information. "We take this seriously and ensure that we are in a secure spot," he said. "PCI is certainly our biggest requirement, but in California we have some additional privacy concerns to consider."

Ahrens said that Luna Grill's security strategy exceeds PCI and privacy considerations. "Security extends well beyond compliance. We put a wide-angle lens on everything we're doing."

To continually stay ahead of any threats, Ahrens wanted to find a cybersecurity expert that would help evaluate Luna Grill's defenses. "It was extremely important to find someone to assist us in looking at all possibilities," he said. "Beyond PCI compliance, we have many other systems that might not deal with cardholder data but could be vulnerable as well." Luna Grill wanted to be sure it was doing everything possible to protect its digital assets and detect and deal with cyberthreats.

## Understanding risks and gaps

Protecting the security of a corporation's networks is a never-ending challenge. Luna Grill called on AT&T Business to evaluate its network defenses and, if necessary, recommend additional protection.

"We were looking for experts to assess our overall security posture," Ahrens said. "We spoke with different security companies, and found that AT&T Business was extremely knowledgeable on our space and what we're trying to do. They came in at full speed from the initial conversations. It just felt like it was the right collaboration."

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Luna Grill asked AT&T Business to evaluate its cybersecurity against widely accepted best practices and frameworks like The National Institute of Standards and Framework's Cybersecurity Framework (NIST CSF) and ISO 27001. The assessment helped Luna Grill understand its security risks and plan future security investments.

"It was extremely helpful for us to put a microscope on our infrastructure and determine if there were any improvements to be made," Ahrens said.

## A roadmap for the future

The AT&T Cybersecurity Risk Posture Assessment involved intensive interviews with the Luna Grill IT team. It also included a close inspection of its networks and procedures. "It was a great exercise," Ahrens said. "The people from AT&T were asking us the right questions. They steered us in the right direction toward what we should be working on next."

Ahrens said he was gratified to learn what Luna Grill was doing right and what they should enhance to get to the next level. "They showed us examples of where we could be three years down the road," he said. "That gave us a good roadmap on what to work on over the next several years to ensure compliance and sustainability when it comes to a secure environment."

AT&T Business also performed a network penetration test, or pen test, to show Luna Grill how its security holds up to real-world scenarios. AT&T Penetration Testing Service gave Ahrens and his organization a functional evaluation of the network and application controls that help to secure their operations.

Ahrens said, "There's a lot of value to the pen test. It enabled us to validate our network segmentation, because the testers weren't able to move across our different networks during all their tests. We expected and received the thumbs up from the AT&T Business team that our segmentation was where it needed to be."



## Guidance from a trusted advisor

Luna Grill benefited significantly from the cybersecurity assessments. “The overall value of the cybersecurity posture assessment comes back to strategic planning,” Ahrens said. Just before the assessment, he and his team had been writing a five-year plan for major capital investment. “As a result of the assessment, we shifted some priorities. It’s been a tremendous help with short- and long-term planning.”

Going forward, Ahrens is excited to continue working closely with AT&T Business. “They look at all aspects of our business and help us determine what our strategy should be. They give us great information.”

Ahrens offered high praise for the AT&T Cybersecurity team members. “They were with us throughout the entire process. It was empowering to see that their entire team would come together and support our organization. Some of the reports we received from AT&T go into a deeper level of detail than we’ve seen from some of our other vendors. Those are some big wins from working with AT&T Business.”

He said Luna Grill considers AT&T Business a trusted advisor and will contact them in the future for cybersecurity consultations. “If we need guidance on any other big projects, we’d reach out to AT&T for sure to see if they had someone in their sphere to help us.”