

CASE STUDY**Secure,
reliable,
and fast**

How Fortinet powers
remote work

Experiencing performance and reliability issues with its firewall solution, a major New Zealand financial services provider turned to Optic Digital for an improved solution. With the delivery of a Fortinet firewall, authentication and switching stack, today the financial services company enjoys assured mobility with security, as all its staff members can access the full suite of business services required for their work, regardless of their location.

The company has also enjoyed substantial improvement to its business continuity posture, which has proven invaluable throughout the COVID-19 lockdown. The financial services company is among the largest providers of investment and other services in New Zealand, offering exposure to global asset classes and insights into markets and opportunities internationally.

SITUATION

As is often the case with technology solutions which were fit for purpose at the time of initial implementation, the march of time meant the incumbent firewall and switching solution had fallen into obsolescence. New ways of doing business, including remote working, necessitated an update, while advances in encryption and intelligent switching provided opportunities for improvement.

The company's IT manager explains: "Our hosting providers had some challenges managing our legacy firewall solution, so we got Optic Digital in. While we were running Citrix terminals through which our staff members accessed our hosted systems from office-based PCs, it all had to change when we moved to a new building and a new way of working."

Along with the new offices, the company issued all staff members with laptops, setting the scene for mobile working. "At this point, we decided to move away from Citrix and instead introduce a Virtual Private Network solution which would enable secure access to backend systems regardless of where they were."

As this was ahead of the comprehensive COVID-19 Level 4 lockdown, the approach proved prescient.

SOLUTION

Optic Digital proposed a solution based on the Fortinet Security Fabric which would deliver a high availability firewall and switching stack. At the centre of the solution is Fortinet's FortiGate next-generation firewall appliances, which use purpose-built security processors and threat intelligence security services. FortiSwitch ethernet and WLAN devices are installed at the two datacentres in which the financial services company's applications and data are housed, and at office locations in Auckland and Wellington.

The FortiGate and FortiSwitch devices work together with FortiAuthenticator and FortiAnalyzer appliances which providing access control - including Multifactor Authentication for the Client VPN - along with a comprehensive reporting capability for visibility and security alerts. The solution is managed by FortiManager, delivering centralised management with best practices compliance and workflow automation.

"A VPN really is a necessity for any modern office, especially if you're interested in helping employees with work/life balance," says the IT manager. "We wanted to give our people the ability to work from home when or if they wanted. And of course, as a financial services provider, we wanted to be certain of end-to-end data security."

Every employee's laptop is equipped with a VPN client along with Fortinet MFA, which sends a code to the user's mobile phone. Combined with username and password, the configuration delivers a high degree of confidence that any user logging in is in fact the right person.

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RESULTS

The best security doesn't only take care of data, it also takes care of people by enabling people rather than complicating their workday. For the financial services provider, Optic Digital has delivered a solution which had little impact in implementation, while being convenient for every user. "On the client side, all it took was a simple install on each laptop. The soft token on the mobile phones is far better than hard ones, which tend to go missing all the time," says the IT manager.



Signing into the Fortinet VPN, too, is easy. "It's literally an extra box on the screen; when logging on, it asks for your credentials and token, and you're in with full access to the systems necessary to do your work."

Automated reporting not only compiles logs and other data required for compliance purposes, but also alerts IT managers to any potential security issues. "All users have the same user ID and password as they use to login to our corporate network; along with their mobile phone and soft token, authentication is watertight," says the spokesperson.

"If we didn't have the Fortinet remote access solution, we really would have had a problem."

FortiManager, he adds, is invaluable for a business which must undergo routine audits into its security systems and posture. "The reports are scheduled and automatic, so we know how many people connected, who

they are and at which times, and what data they accessed. And if further detail is required, Report Manager means the evidence is always readily available."

The confidence that the financial services provider enjoys in its VPN and broader network security is complemented by the enhanced business continuity posture it enjoys.

"As the lockdown took hold, we were perfectly positioned for working from home. While we were a little worried about an increased number of concurrent users on the VPN, it's worked flawlessly. Usually we'd have 30 or 40 percent of our people coming in remotely, now it's been around 100 percent and it's been flawless, allowing business to continue even if it isn't exactly usual," the IT manager noted. "If we didn't have the Fortinet remote access solution, we really would have had a problem."

In his final assessment of the Fortinet solution, the IT manager describes it as reliable and practically invisible. "It just works. Our people connect and get on with work, without any hassle."