

Leica Geosystems

Global leader relies on Fortinet for worldwide VPN and security

Case Study

Situation

Leica Geosystems is a pioneer in the development and production of measuring instruments. The company provides a wide range of innovative products and solutions to record and analyse data as well as visualise and present information. The global company is headquartered in Heerbrugg in Switzerland and 3,000 employees in 22 countries and hundreds of partners in 120 countries serve the needs of thousands of customers worldwide. The company stands for reliability, added value and excellent support and service. As a result, Leica Geosystems expects the same from its IT infrastructure.



With many branch offices and mobile workers around the world, efficient, reliable and secure communications is critical. Until 2006, in order to secure its network, Leica Geosystems was using Nokia Cryptocluster for VPN and SonicWall firewalls in the headquarters as well as a range of other firewalls in the branch offices. As the Nokia solution reached end of life, the IT department was faced with the challenge of looking for a new VPN solution. In addition, the continued growth of the company led to stability problems with the firewall and access issues due to high workloads.

Leica Geosystems carried out a thorough analysis of its security needs, business goals and technical challenges. Those included not only the primary VPN issue but also: a lack of firewall standardisation resulting in administrative overhead; increasing security demands in the branch offices; legal issues relating to URL filtering; increasing numbers of business-to-business (B2B) connections to new partners and customers; and cost efficiency.

"Initially we were only looking to replace our VPN solution and perhaps refresh our firewall. However, when we realized what other topics were important, we were close to despair. We did not know how we could possibly meet all these technical demands without investing in a variety of disparate solutions, which would have in turn increased the administrative efforts and related costs," said Alexander Perle, head of Client Management, Networks & CAD/PDM at Leica Geosystems.

Solution

An analysis of the available VPN/ firewall solutions available on the market led Leica Geosystems to discovering the term "Unified Threat Management" and Fortinet. Fortinet was able to offer all the features that Leica Geosystems was looking for: fast, reliable VPN functionality, ease-of-use, all-in-one security functionality including firewall, antivirus, anti-spam, IPS and URL filtering. In addition, Fortinet offered extensive logs and reporting capabilities which are important to Leica's IT team for internal analysis purposes and compliance requirements.

Deployment:
FortiGate-400A
FortiGate-100A
FortiGate-50B

Industry:
Industry

"It wasn't just the functionality and ease-of-use that impressed us. The pre-sales support and fast reaction times of the Fortinet team are also to be mentioned. In addition, we welcome the flexible and fair licensing model, enabling us to grow and extend our environment without any addition costs," explains Alexander Perle.

After choosing Fortinet, Leica started with the roll-out. As the primary objective of the security deployment was the VPN connection, the company started by installing FortiGate®-100A and FortiGate-50B appliances in the branch offices and with B2B partner companies and customers around the world. Two FortiGate-400A appliances were installed in the headquarters in Heerbrugg acting as a VPN hub for the decentralized appliances. In spite of the relatively large and widespread installed base, the initial infrastructure was up and running within several weeks. Adding new VPN tunnels with other offices and partners is a matter of an hour or less.

As Leica is a global company and VPN functionality is needed 24/7, the centrally deployed appliances are clustered for high availability, so that if one fails, the other automatically takes on the workload. After the initial installation, two additional FortiGate-400A appliances were installed in the headquarters specifically for firewall and URL filtering purposes to protect against attacks on the corporate network and increase productivity. Leica leverages the virtualization capabilities of those two FortiGate appliances, giving its IT team the flexibility to virtualize the existing physical firewalls into a single hardware platform without changing the network topology. Today, Leica is running four virtual firewalls on the clustered FortiGate appliances. This reduces the workload of the two VPN appliances and guarantees high performance levels. Thanks to the VPN connections, the IT staff at Leica Geosystems can monitor the external appliances and trouble shoot remotely if necessary.

To improve the transparency, Leica Geosystems extended its Fortinet solution by adding FortiAnalyzer™, Fortinet's real-time network logging, analyzing and reporting tool. This system enables the IT team to collate and analyse log data from all the Fortinet appliances, giving them a comprehensive view of network usage and security information. As a result, they can create tailored reports on the activity of the appliances for internal purposes or to report connectivity and performance levels back to the B2B partners. The reports include information about data volumes, URL filtering to monitor compliance, as well as top user and top site statistics. To further improve and simplify management, Leica is also using FortiManager™ – a tool to monitor and manage the complete environment at a glance via a web browser.

The centralized and easy management of the 105 appliances is an important advantage. "There are only two people responsible for the security set up at Leica," says Alexander Perle. "Before installing the Fortinet appliances, the management workload was considerably higher as we were often not able to simply solve a problem via the Internet but had to travel to the location with the problem – a logistical nightmare. Now everything is centralized and we can easily troubleshoot and manage all VPN connections and firewall within one central console."

Success

The company has seen significant advantages relating to employee productivity. The fast and reliable VPN functionality means that all employees around the globe can access the critical central IT systems such as SAP, Intranet, Lotus Notes and the financial management systems. In addition, the firewall and Web filtering security services helped fill-in the Internet security gaps, protecting users from viruses and other malware threats.

Alexander Perle summarizes: "We were looking to create a standardized, centralized VPN and firewall environment with minimal maintenance and maximum security. In Fortinet, we have received so much more. We have not only stable VPN connections helping us maintain internal and external SLAs but also a comprehensive all-in-one security solution."

About Fortinet

Fortinet is the pioneer and leading provider of ASIC-accelerated unified threat management, or UTM, security systems, which are used by enterprises and service providers to increase their security while reducing total operating costs. Fortinet solutions were built from the ground up to integrate multiple levels of security protection--including firewall, antivirus, intrusion prevention, VPN, spyware prevention and anti-spam -- designed to help customers protect against network and content level threats. Leveraging a custom ASIC and unified interface, Fortinet solutions offer advanced security functionality that scales from remote office to chassis-based solutions with integrated management and reporting. Fortinet solutions have won multiple awards around the world and are the only security products that are certified in six programs by ICSA Labs (Firewall, Antivirus, IPSec, SSL, Network IPS and Anti-Spam). Fortinet is privately held and based in Sunnyvale, California.

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