

Fit for anything

Gold's Gym updates its infrastructure



When the best-of-breed solutions proved too costly, the gym brand turned to Fortinet. By John Sterlicchi

Mention the name Gold's Gym and people might think of body builders at California's Venice Beach or even Arnold Schwarzenegger in his first hit movie *Pumping Iron*.

However, the vast majority of its members don't have aspirations to be Mr or Ms Universe – they're just trying to make a few improvements to their lifestyles to keep all the bad stuff at bay.

Kurt Koenig, Gold's IT manager, has a similar philosophy when it comes to upgrading the company's network infrastructure, especially when it comes to keeping viruses and other irritants off the system. He sees the value of improvements, but doesn't want to bust the bank just to get in shape.

A private company, Gold's still uses the original Venice Beach building, not only as a gym, but also one of three corporate offices it has in the U.S. Although it franchises hundreds of gyms – 550 in 25 countries, with 2.5 million members – Gold's actually runs only 37 in the U.S.

A couple of years back, when Koenig joined the company, he realized that security needed a makeover.

First of all, the data center had a firewall more suited to a home user than a corporation. Security at the corporate offices, which are on a T-1-based dedicated-hardware VPN solution, was what came with the routers. It was a similar story at the gyms – which are on a 64K frame relay network – security was whatever came free with the desktop computers. "I realized that it was going to be a major problem," says Koenig.



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Now, Gold's has Citrix-based point-of-sale terminals in the gyms. "These are basically our cash registers – and if for some reason someone is able to hack in, it means our cash registers will be shut down and that will hit the bottom line real quick," he says.

Then there is the personal data and the proprietary information related to the way Gold's does business. "That's why we have to keep people out."

Worried about the firm's security, Koenig went out and researched the standard best-of-breed solution, but "the costs were so outrageous," he says

A little more research and Koenig came across Fortinet, a young company that had developed its FortiGate product line of anti-virus firewalls aimed at real-time network protection.

Fortinet says the secret of its success is the hardware, which performs the deep-packet analysis, content reassembly and application-level screening necessary to detect threats without imposing unacceptable delays on real-time network applications.

"Our unique, ASIC-based architecture analyzes network content and behavior in real-time, enabling all key network services – including real-time web applications – to be screened for both network and content-level threats without impacting network perform-

ance," says Fortinet's vice-president of product management Richard Hanke.

But it was price that first attracted Gold's to Fortinet – and then Koenig was won over by the way the company backed and supported its product.

While he will not give out actual figures, he says buying an initial three FortiGate devices, plus a maintenance contract and having them installed cost roughly an eighth of the price of the so-called best-of-breed solution.

"The price for the three firewalls at the time and the maintenance contract was cheaper than just the technician hours to install the other solution. It was a huge difference," he recalls.

Now there are FortiGate 60s in each of the gyms and FortiGate 100s in the corporate offices. Even though Gold's is revamping its wide area network to accommodate both the offices and the gyms, the company will be sticking with Fortinet for its security needs.

"Ever since I put the Fortinet products in place, we haven't had a viral outbreak. The Fortinet catches the majority of them," he says.

Now Gold's is experimenting with the Forti-WiFi 60, which combines complete, real-time enterprise-level network protection and a wireless access point.

Gold's will be putting the devices in the homes of its executives, so they can be securely connected to their office data via cable modem.

The WiFi firewall fits into Gold's disaster contingency plan. If something happens to one of the corporate offices, the executives will be able run the business from their home offices.

Maybe they will put them in gyms next, so the executives can work out and work at the same time.

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