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*– Mitch Hirsch
Network Engineer
Kennards Hire*



Australian Equipment Rental Company Relies on Fortinet’s UTM Solution for Highly Connected and Secure Network

Equipment rental firm Kennards Hire bolsters security posture, reduces down time and implements new technology initiatives with FortiGate 94D-POE and FortiAP-223B

The Situation

Kennards Hire is a leader in the equipment hire and rental industry, with a reputation for delivering premium quality products and unparalleled customer service. Founded in 1948, the family-owned company has 150 sites throughout Australia and New Zealand that provide equipment rental solutions. Equipment ranges from small hand held tools to large specialist products suited to commercial construction and mining sites. With the goal of being the best hire company, but not necessarily the biggest, Kennards relentlessly pursues operational excellence and strives to deliver outstanding customer service.

Details

Customer Name: Kennards Hire
Industry: Equipment hire, and machinery rental
Location: Sydney, Australia, with 150 sites in Australia and New Zealand

Business Impact

- A consolidated and centrally managed platform to streamline network infrastructure
- Ability to implement Wi-Fi and VoIP consistently across all retail locations
- Advanced threat protection capabilities, including NGFW and zone-based security

Deployment

- FortiGate 94D-POE, FortiAP-223B, FortiAnalyzer-100C, FortiManager-1000C

These high standards of quality and excellence extended to the company's telephony strategy. Kennards had previously adopted the FortiGate 60C solution to address a historical issue of the lack of WAN redundancy and brought in standard Unified Threat Management capabilities, including anti-virus and application control.

The Challenge

Kennards' telephony system is the lifeblood of the company. Most customer enquiries are received by phone into each branch. Kennards used a PABX with at least two ISDN2 on-ramps at each site. This system was inefficient as it did not allow for global changes easily. Recurring maintenance and upgrade costs related to the PABX system were high. For example, if a branch wanted to add a new functionality such as an auto-attendant, additional hardware and installation was often required, increasing the costs and leading to a deconstructed and inconsistent system across the organization.

Introducing a new branch or relocating an existing one in the network was a very complex and involved process. Kennards would need to bring in Telstra and the owners of the telephony equipment, and get the heavy involvement of their own IT team, driving up costs to the company.

The final and probably most important challenge was the slow redundancy failover process when ISDN lines go down. It typically takes two to three hours to transfer calls and a further few hours to resolve the issue, causing major loss of customer contact and valuable business opportunities.

"We were working with an inconsistent telephone system that was growing in its complexity and maintenance costs and we found ourselves taking a reactive approach instead of an unattainable proactive one," said Mitch Hirsch, network engineer at Kennards Hire.

The Solution

Kennards Hire required a consolidated and centrally managed telephony system that would simplify and streamline communications at each retail site, without losing functionality or performance. It looked to VoIP technology to overcome its challenges, requiring the replacement system to be robust, reliable, resilient and of high quality.

Kennards undertook a comprehensive selection process before selecting systems integrator Essential Data + Voice (EDV) for its expertise in the design, implementation and management of converged voice and data networks. EDV developed a centralised unified communications and contact centre solution based on Mitel VoIP technology using Telstra SIP that replaced the legacy ISDN lines. The solution ensured that all customer calls were answered either by the branch or the contact centre with the customer connected to the right person as efficiently as possible.

Each of Kennards' branch sites was connected to the MPLS via a Retail IP (ADSL) data carriage. EDV reviewed existing WAN and determined that an upgrade to a 512/512K Ethernet light data link at every site dedicated to voice would provide the optimal WAN solution. Fortinet's advanced policy-based routing capabilities allowed branch traffic to follow the appropriate WAN link whilst simultaneously having multiple means of redundancy (including an "always on" 4G service) in the event of a link failure. This architecture delivered as close to a "100% uptime" solution as possible without excessive expense, thus lowering Kennards' total cost of ownership (TCO).

Further, EDV recommended the FortiGate-94D-POE UTM appliance with FortiAP-223B Wi-Fi access points, to create a highly resilient, robust and secure network infrastructure designed to cater to its current business requirements, while still offering enough scalability for the company to adopt future technologies down the road. The FortiManager-1000C allows a single point of administration to deliver all services to all locations nationally. As a whole, the FortiGate appliance offers a single platform that provides connectivity for both

standard and POE devices; security and redundancy for all client devices at each site.

“The Fortinet Connect and Secure solution consolidates and centralises all the points of management, which made it ideal for Kennards Hire’s need to relieve the pressure off the retail sites, while allowing it to upgrade to a comprehensive solution that could be implemented easily and improve its ROI,” says David Turnbull, CEO at EDV.

Fortinet’s Connect and Secure UTM Advantage

Fortinet’s Connect and Secure solution comprises an integrated line of FortiGate Unified Threat Management (UTM), FortiSwitch wired switch, FortiAP wireless LAN and FortiExtender 4G wireless WAN products. This unique end-to-end solution provides unparalleled threat protection, unified network access, and management capabilities, allowing distributed organisations such as Kennards Hire to better adhere to compliance regulations and implement new technology initiatives.

Aligning with Kennards’ functionality and high-performance requirements, the FortiGate-94D-POE provides 48 Ethernet switch-ports including Power

over Ethernet, as well as the ability to integrate a 4G modem. This perfectly addressed Kennards’ need for WAN redundancy, VPN tunnel termination and even eliminated the need for a stand-alone Ethernet switch. In addition, Fortinet’s Connect and Secure solution enabled Kennards to introduce Wi-Fi across all of their retail locations, with one SSID configured to provide BYOD access for employees, and another a guest SSID for customers.

Finally, the comprehensive security of the Connect and Secure solution provided Kennards with a wide range of advanced threat protection capabilities, including NGFW and zone-based security, to stave off increasingly sophisticated threats that could compromise company and customer data.

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