

CASE STUDY

Secure SD-Branch Facilitates Technology Modernization for Australian Equipment Rental Business

Equipment rental company Kennards Hire has more than 180 branches, with nearly 1,500 employees, across Australia and New Zealand. The company rents all sorts of commercial construction and mining equipment—from dump trucks and skid steers to handheld gas detectors and pressure gauges—as well as necessities for entertaining, such as barbecue spits and party tents.

All told, Kennards Hire is the largest family-owned equipment rental provider in Australia. However, growth has not been the company's primary objective. Since its founding in 1948, Kennards Hire has developed a reputation for delivering premium-quality products and unparalleled customer service. Part of the reason it has been able to provide excellent service is a commitment to effectively leveraging available technologies.

"We pride ourselves on our service, so it is absolutely paramount that our technology is really, really good," says Martin McManus, CIO.

Adds Nicolas Aragnou, the company's IT infrastructure lead, "IT is very important for Kennards. We try to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to technology, security, and general well-being in terms of moving away from the manual side of things toward empowering our employees to be able to do their daily job."

SD-WAN: Efficient Connectivity to Cloud Applications

To that end, the company has been moving key workloads to the cloud. Kennards Hire developed applications that leverage new Internet-of-Things (IoT) technologies and run in a Microsoft Azure environment. At the same time, the organization migrated its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to Amazon Web Services (AWS).

With employees spread across 180 branches needing to access key software solutions residing in multiple public clouds, the company found it no longer made sense to route all traffic through its primary data center. Its multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) connections were expensive, and the telecommunications provider was so inflexible that the Kennards Hire leadership team felt their reliance on MPLS was hindering the business's evolution.

They decided to shift the branch locations' networking to direct internet connectivity via software-defined wide-area networking (SD-WAN), which offers higher-performance connections that do not have to be routed through the corporate data center. The trick would be to avoid any reduction in data and application security. "What keeps me up at night is ensuring that the environment is secure and safe," McManus says.



"Fortinet's technology is rock-solid. It really gives us options around how we create our network of the future. We have the right technology provider, and that is Fortinet."

– Martin McManus, CIO,
Kennards Hire

Details

Customer: Kennards Hire

Industry: Retail

Location: Sydney, Australia

Business Impact

- Improved network performance and reliability
- Enabled rapid rollout—20 minutes to bring a branch's networking and security online
- Deployment of SD-Branch to 180 branches in eight weeks
- Reduced staff resources required to manage security and networking companywide
- Saved the business hundreds of thousands of dollars per year

Kennards Hire selected Fortinet solutions to provide SD-WAN functionality, along with the same security capabilities that protect the company's data center.

"We chose Fortinet for a couple of reasons," Aragnou says. "One of those was the relationship we were able to build with the Fortinet team. Another was the value they provided. And the third was the technology standpoint that they had aligned with our values at Kennards and where we wanted to take the network and the infrastructure."

To consolidate and simplify security at the branches, the company deployed the Fortinet SD-Branch solution. The platform includes Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, which provides fast, reliable, efficient, and secure connectivity among corporate branches and the cloud, as well as FortiSwitch, FortiAP access points (APs), and FortiExtender devices. "Prior to Fortinet, we faced a lot of issues around system downtime and interruptions, which ultimately affected our customer experience," Aragnou says. "We want to keep the customers coming back; we want to keep them happy. To do that, we need to empower the branches to run as seamlessly as possible."

Rollout was rapid, thanks to the FortiManager centralized management solution. "FortiManager allowed us to streamline the deployment process, from a few days to around 20 minutes," Aragnou says. "We could have a fresh vanilla device out to a site, and within 20 minutes, we could have a fully operational branch." In fact, Kennards Hire was able to roll out SD-Branch to all 180 branches in just eight weeks.

Better Performance, Lower-cost Networking

The centralization of ongoing security management, reporting, and analytics—via FortiManager and FortiAnalyzer—is a major benefit of the Fortinet SD-Branch solution. "IT is an ever-changing environment," McManus points out. "We have to service a lot of technology for [all our] branches so that they can service our customers." The Fortinet solution has significantly reduced the administrative overhead required to support the Kennards Hire network.

At the same time, the Fortinet Secure SD-WAN solution has improved both performance and reliability of the branches' wide-area networking (WAN) connections. Aragnou reports that the network is now "invisible" to end-users, which enables the branches to better serve customers. In addition, the solution accelerates failover of a dropped connection "from roughly two to three minutes, to a couple of seconds," Aragnou adds. "So, it is about a 15-times increase in failover."

The move to Fortinet SD-Branch with Secure SD-WAN, FortiSwitch, FortiAP, and FortiExtender is saving the company hundreds of thousands of dollars a year and enabling Kennards Hire to better execute on corporate strategy as it moves more workloads into the cloud. "The future is moving away from hardware to virtual," Aragnou says. "Obviously, keeping that relationship with Fortinet enables us to move from an on-premises data center toward a virtual cloud infrastructure, utilizing Fortinet products to protect the borders for us."

"Fortinet's customer service has been great, and their technology is rock-solid," McManus concludes. "It really gives us options around how we create our network of the future. We have the right technology provider, and that is Fortinet."

Solutions

- Fortinet Secure SD-WAN
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAP
- FortiExtender
- FortiManager
- FortiAnalyzer



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