



CASE STUDY

Secure Networking, Deployed Fast, Supports Rapid Growth for Quick-service Restaurant Group



GPS Hospitality owns hundreds of Burger King, Popeye’s Louisiana Kitchen, and Pizza Hut franchises, mostly in the southeastern United States, but reaching into Michigan and Pennsylvania as well. The company’s expansion strategy called for an outsourced approach to IT, in order to efficiently support restaurants’ technology environment across a broad geographic area. GPS Hospitality chose to work with HonorBuilt to develop a secure networking infrastructure. Now, each restaurant relies on two FortiSwitch devices, a FortiGate next-generation firewall (NGFW), and two FortiAP access points. Centralized management of the dispersed network and security infrastructure enables rapid resolution with HonorBuilt’s helpdesk, and the smooth rollout of the Fortinet platform in each new location supports ongoing growth for GPS Hospitality.

Fast Growth Enabled by a Trusted Partner

GPS Hospitality restaurants provide fast food, but the company’s focus is on the overall dining experience. “We’re looking to be our guests’ favorite fast food destination,” says Jim Barlow, director of IT. That focus has been successful. Among other accolades, Burger King named GPS Hospitality its Global Franchisee of the Year for 2018. The focus on customer satisfaction has also enabled the company to acquire additional restaurants at an astounding pace.

Launched in 2012 with 42 locations, GPS Hospitality now operates 486 restaurants across 11 states. To maintain operational efficiency while scaling the business up by more than 1,000% over seven years, GPS Hospitality decided early on to outsource IT support for its restaurants. It engaged HonorBuilt, an IT service provider that specializes in the quick-service restaurant (QSR) industry, for IT deployment and support services.

“HonorBuilt provides our hardware, our software, and our networking,” Barlow explains. “They are our helpdesk and our feet on the ground. If someone needs to go to a restaurant to provide break-fix service, HonorBuilt handles it. They also project-manage the technology environment in all our new restaurants and our remodels.” The relationship saves GPS Hospitality time and money. It has also made possible the rapid growth that has marked the company’s first decade. “When you have a broad geographic footprint, like GPS does, you need a vendor that can support locations across vast distances,” Barlow adds. “Relying on HonorBuilt has given us the flexibility to grow quickly while still running a small internal IT team.”

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– Jim Barlow, Director of IT, GPS Hospitality

Details

Customer: GPS Hospitality

Industry: Restaurants

Location: Atlanta, Georgia

Partner: HonorBuilt

Business Impact

- Deployed new secure network architecture to 200 restaurants in just two months
- Provided strong security and Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliance
- Enabled 1,000%+ growth in business’s first seven years
- Increased global network management efficiency

Challenges of a Disparate Technology Infrastructure

Early on, GPS Hospitality and HonorBuilt realized that IT standardization would be crucial to continued growth. “Anytime you’re running a variety of technologies in your different locations, management is very difficult,” Barlow says. “As an example, if we had 50 sites with one firewall, 60 sites with another firewall, and so on, HonorBuilt would have to do the same thing over and over again on all the different platforms every time we needed to change anything.”

This scenario could have become reality. Over the years, the company’s acquisition targets have utilized a variety of different brands of firewall, and some have had no firewall at all. However, under GPS Hospitality’s standardization policy, every newly acquired restaurant is migrated to the company’s chosen technology architecture within 90 days.

The standardized networking infrastructure that HonorBuilt initially rolled out hit some snags as GPS Hospitality grew. “We had chosen a vendor whose firewalls were challenging to manage across so many locations,” says Andy Patterson, senior technology consultant for HonorBuilt. “The management suite was not cutting it for us, especially when it came to PCI [Payment Card Industry] compliance. We needed to control which websites the point-of-sale system in each restaurant could reach, but centrally managing the GPS Hospitality whitelist was difficult.”

When HonorBuilt discovered the Fortinet Fabric Management Center (FortiManager/ FortiAnalyzer) centralized management platform for Fortinet security solutions, Patterson and his colleagues immediately recognized the benefits for both management efficiency and compliance. The HonorBuilt team also liked the tight integration among Fortinet solutions. And Barlow’s team was already familiar with Fortinet from using the solutions at previous employers. “When I joined GPS Hospitality, they were in the process of converting to Fortinet, and I applauded that move to standardize,” Barlow says.

Fortinet Solutions Provide Tight Integration and Centralized Management

HonorBuilt began rolling out a new network architecture. Now, every GPS Hospitality restaurant runs four networks: One local-area network (LAN) supports only the point-of-sale system. One LAN provides employees with back-office access to cloud-based restaurant applications. One Wi-Fi network makes internet access available to customers. And one Wi-Fi network is accessible by employees’ tablet computers, which they use in inventory management, hiring, training, and similar purposes.

Within each restaurant, two FortiSwitch devices provide the network connectivity—one for the point-of-sale network and one for the other three networks. In the event that one switch becomes unavailable, the other will provide virtual LAN (VLAN) failover and support all four networks until HonorBuilt resolves the issue. A FortiGate NGFW protects all digital traffic into and out of the restaurant, while two FortiAP access points provide wireless connectivity for the Wi-Fi networks. The FortiMail secure email gateway protects email traffic both in the stores and at corporate headquarters.

HonorBuilt uses the Fabric Management Center to monitor security across GPS Hospitality’s hundreds of restaurants through a single pane of glass. The team also uses FortiAnalyzer, a core part of the Fabric Management Center, for network analytics across their infrastructure. By better supporting GPS Hospitality’s generation of PCI compliance reports, HonorBuilt was able to eliminate a separate third-party tool they formerly used to access certain compliance data. More importantly, using the Fabric Management Center greatly streamlines processes for HonorBuilt.

“For us, as the service provider, global management is the number-one benefit of using the Fortinet solutions,” Patterson says. “Before using the FortiManager solution, we had no way of pushing out global updates. Now we can do it in minutes, across all 486 GPS Hospitality locations.”

Solutions

- FortiGate
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAP
- FortiManager
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiMail

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Partnerships for the Long Term

Both HonorBuilt and GPS Hospitality have a great deal of confidence in the level of network security they are achieving through the Fortinet infrastructure. They are also thrilled with the speed of rollout. Initial deployment of the new platform “was a breeze, honestly,” Patterson says. “We had very few issues, if any. It was just seamless.” The first 200 restaurants moved to the Fortinet secure network infrastructure within just two months.

Moving forward, the Fabric Management Center makes opening a new restaurant “almost cookie-cutter at this point,” Barlow says. “Our partnership with HonorBuilt and our use of Fortinet solutions makes it very easy to put our same footprint in every restaurant. When the technology platform is as standardized as ours, a company can grow very quickly.”

The combination of Fortinet solutions and HonorBuilt services is a foundation on which GPS Hospitality expects to continue to expand. “HonorBuilt is a top-notch organization,” Barlow says. “Knowing that their world-class service is supported by Fortinet’s world-class solutions enables me to know this solution is the right one for our company.”



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