

CASE STUDY

Brazilian Top Supermarket Chain Fortifies Its Operations With Fortinet Secure SD-WAN

Grupo Coutinho, controller of the brands Extrabom Supermercados, Extraplus Supermercados, and Atacado Vem, is a Brazilian food retail company operating 42 shops and two e-commerce platforms in the state of Espírito Santo. Founded in 1978, Grupo Coutinho is, according to the Abras Ranking, the largest supermarket chain in Espírito Santo, ranking 38th nationally. Serving more than 2 million customers per month, the group works to be relevant to stakeholders, innovative and agile, generating a positive impact on society, and expects to reach an annual revenue of R\$2 billion (USD \$380M) by 2022.

In 2019, this over 5,000-employee company launched an ambitious technology decentralization project, based on improving business processes and meeting geographic needs. The group had its information architecture consolidated at its headquarters using an on-site infrastructure, providing network services for business applications and in-store customer connectivity. They needed to improve services in their branch network and be less dependent on the headquarters. This led the company to move away from this on-premises infrastructure and rely on a data center to strengthen its IT operations.

“We understood that the infrastructure you use wouldn’t have worked to boost our distributed operations to keep up with our growing business,” explains Vítor Ventura, IT manager at Grupo Coutinho. “After an analysis of the products in the market, we concluded that Fortinet Secure SD-WAN was the way to go.”

Opportunity to Develop a New Infrastructure

Grupo Coutinho’s biggest challenge was to keep up with a growing operation as the company moved from 35 stores in 2019 to 42 stores in 2022. The new network infrastructure project had to be executed while maintaining good cybersecurity performance and keeping back-office operations uninterrupted.

Previously, the entire network connectivity of the company’s branches went through headquarters before being distributed through the internet. All the hardware connected to the branches was on-premises; if there was a failure or a cyberattack, the IT team had to go on-site to address the issue, and this access was not always readily available. Even though the company had redundant internet links, they had to perform manual procedures to manage and control which were active. This resulted in a system vulnerable to attacks, aside from causing delays in the processes and extra manual tasks.

To solve all these challenges, Grupo Coutinho had the advice and support of LiveConsult Tecnologia, Fortinet’s local partner, and adopted Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, based on FortiGate Next-Generation Firewalls deployed at each location. With this solution, the company was able to safely distribute operations



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Details

Customer: Grupo Coutinho

Industry: Retail

Location: Brazil

Number of endpoints: 42

Business Impact

- Secure distributed operations while offering branches connectivity
- Centralized management of network infrastructure
- Over 30% cost savings in IT infrastructure and operations
- Deeper data analysis for better services quality
- Improved business-process visibility for better decision making

by linking all the branches plus headquarters into one centralized system. The solution offers high availability and redundancy for all the locations. “Fortinet Secure SD-WAN brought us peace of mind and confidence that everything works automatically and seamlessly, delivers the best performance,” Vítor says. Today, with Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, Grupo Coutinho’s IT team can monitor the network remotely and fix issues without having to go on-site. The solution allowed the company to avoid dedicated links and simplify the network management, resulting in over 30% cost savings in IT infrastructure and operations.

The company also relies on FortiSwitch secure Ethernet switches, integrated with third-party access points. Along with FortiGate NGFW, both deliver all the external and internal traffic routing for the stores. FortiSwitch also helps Grupo Coutinho manage network segmentation throughout the structure, enabling the IT team to allocate resources on a more granular level.

The addition of FortiAnalyzer, a real-time incident logging and reporting solution, provides the company a platform with advanced log management, analysis, and reporting to proactively prevent attacks.

High Visibility to Enhance Business Processes

Despite the work of the IT department becoming more detailed during the expansion and decentralization project, Grupo Coutinho scored massive wins in the data analysis process in terms of depth. Today, the company can drill down on its data and be more proactive with its deliveries.

“Fortinet ended up giving us more visibility of the environment—what our typical delivery cycles are and how we can better manage our delivery timelines. The information helps us plan better, which leads to improved service quality,” remarks Vítor.

For instance, the company achieved visibility into its refrigeration equipment due to new monitoring devices now connected to the network, enabling proactive maintenance to ensure the quality of its products along the cold chain.

In some stores, they implemented monitoring of the entire cold chain—the cold rooms, and the entire refrigeration process—to ensure they were at the right temperature even while doing maintenance. This guarantees the quality of the product for the end consumer, which is most important for the company.

“We now have a more robust, high-performance, and professional network environment,” Vítor shares. “Fortinet offers us a huge leap in technology with a great price-performance ratio. We’re looking forward to evolving our implementation and exploring new services and functionalities with Fortinet,” he concludes.

Solutions

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewalls
- Fortinet Secure SD-WAN
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAnalyzer

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