Building a Future-Facing IT Estate for Marina Developments Limited

Marina Developments Limited, or MDL Marinas, is one of the world's leading marina and water-based leisure providers and one of Europe's largest marina groups. With a portfolio of 20 prime marina locations, an extended cruising network of 150 locations in the UK and Europe and over 300 marine businesses across its estate. MDL has a vast footprint in its industry. It works with a number of different stakeholders, from the local authorities where its marinas are located, to boat owners who use its berthing and boatyard services.

This means that MDL needs a robust, reliable and secure IT estate to keep operations running smoothly. In January 2019, a new Head of IT joined the organisation with the stated aim of taking a wide-ranging look at IT infrastructure and what could be improved, including the potential for SD-WAN adoption in the future. Initial assessments revealed a number of security requirements, which the company believed it could meet by utilising the Fortinet Security Fabric.

That meant improving perimeter security, assessing network and traffic segregation, and taking a look at the equipment being used, some of which was lacking in features or drifting towards becoming legacy. Many of these objectives were driven by the way MDL works with its customers, as well as how it wants its IT estate to look in the coming years – such as its intention to embrace SD-WAN.

Challenges Keeping IT Afloat

MDL wanted to be on the front foot with IT. However, it was felt that the business was not able to be as proactive as they would like when tackling problems, and didn't have good visibility of its IT performance and infrastructure. Other pressing issues included the monitoring and analysis of data, and how MDL could handle device performance and management, centrally. The IT team has also committed to reviewing WAN infrastructure in 2020, with the aim of adopting SD-WAN. This meant any new deployment strategy had to be flexible enough to accommodate future changes and the security requirements of an SD-WAN infrastructure.

The primary motivation for addressing these challenges was becoming more efficient and forward-looking with IT management. However, with a fairly small IT team, MDL was also interested in the cost and resource savings that updating its IT estate could bring about.

Beyond that, the business also faced security risks. Although MDL hadn't directly experienced a breach, IT leaders knew that the potential for one was there – particularly if the company failed to modernise appropriately. And with a number of third parties having some level of access to parts of the MDL network (from boat owners to on-site service providers), the potential risk of an external hacker attempting to gain entry was high.

> *"We had a lot of IT objectives to achieve, from strengthening perimeter security to assessing traffic segregation more effectively – and our existing equipment wasn't able to support this, so we needed to act."*
>
> – *Keith,*
>   *Head of IT at*
>   *Marina Developments Limited*

Details

Customer: Marina Developments Limited

Industry: Maritime

Location: United Kingdom

Charting a New Course

MDL knew it needed to act – but it also foresaw that any investment into its IT estate could be a time-consuming process, so it wanted to approach a vendor with an excellent global reputation, as well as a strong product offering. It was also keen to work with a vendor that had experience in SD-WAN, as this relatively new technology would likely play a big part in its future infrastructure.

Having had a positive experience working with Fortinet in the past, MDL felt confident that this would be a good route to go down for such a major project. The process was highly collaborative, with the Head of IT and Fortinet engineers working closely together to devise the most effective plan.

After a careful consultation process, Fortinet was able to provide a suite of products to help MDL meet its IT and security objectives. This included a number of FortiGate Firewalls across various sites, to provide high threat protection, along with a centralised user identity management solution, FortiAuthenticator. FortiAPs will provide single pane Wi-Fi management and security, while FortiExtenders will be used at sites that don't have their own connectivity, to provide a primary WAN connection point.

Although not originally part of the deployment plan, MDL also decided to include a number of FortiSwitches, a type of Ethernet LAN Switch that can provide simple management for Ethernet access through integration with FortiGate.

As this deployment is the first step of a wider infrastructure refresh, MDL expects to continue to work with Fortinet in the future. Security was high on the business' agenda, so it was keen to get this aspect of its new infrastructure up and running first. The products have also been chosen with the view that they can support SD-WAN capabilities; for example, SD-WAN can create some concerns around security with direct internet access, so having best-of-breed firewalls in place can help to mitigate any risks.

A Smarter, More Efficient IT Department

This deployment will offer MDL a host of new benefits. On the business side, data protection and security will be markedly improved. Now more than ever, being able to hold confidential personal data is essential – especially when it comes to maintaining a brand's reputation. Fortinet's solution has reassured MDL business owners that all entry points will be covered, minimising the risk of a breach.

By providing a single pane of glass view, MDL's new solution will also empower staff to work more intelligently and efficiently. This will simplify operations and be a significant time saver, all while decreasing the risk of human error. As MDL has a relatively small IT team, the value of this can't be understated – with more automation and less time spent resolving issues, employees will be freed up to work on other strategic projects. And in the future, a move to SD-WAN will offer IT staff greater control and visibility over their network, making management even smoother.

A Secure Future for Marina Developments Limited

Taking a future-facing IT approach is vital to the success of any modern business, but especially organisations like MDL, which deals with so many customers and third parties on a daily basis. Using a single vendor will allow the team to work smarter and more efficiently, with improved security and optimised management of the IT estate – ensuring that MDL is ready to navigate the challenges it faces, now and in the future.

Business Impact

- Greater control and more visibility over the IT estate
- Improved security and reassurance for business owners
- Resource and time savings for MDL's IT team
- Flexibility to introduce SD-WAN infrastructure in the future

Solution

- FortiGate
- FortiAuthenticator
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiAPs
- FortiGate Extenders
- FortiSwitches

"We wanted to be more proactive, with greater visibility of our estate – empowering us to monitor and analyse data more effectively."

*– Keith,
Head of IT at
Marina Developments Limited*

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