

CASE STUDY

Guatemalan Credit Union Network Secures Connectivity in More Than 250 Branches With FortiGate Secure SD-WAN

The MICOOPE system integrates cooperatives and solidarity finance organizations, constituting the most important nonprofit society in Guatemala. It is a solidarity lending financial system, specializing in financial intermediation activities, whose main objective is to contribute to improving the quality of life of Guatemalans through providing financial solutions originating from participating Savings and Credit Cooperatives. Today MICOOPE has a network of 300 branch locations across the country. It also integrates two other companies: the insurance company Seguros Columna, and the MICOOPE Guarantee Fund, which backs the investments of its more than 2 million customers.

The branches are crucial for MICOOPE's operations. Members can manage administrative procedures, make payments, and purchase services through these branches. Automated teller machines (ATMs) are available in 200 of the branches, allowing customers to interact easily with the credit unions. The institution also has an online services platform.

MICOOPE realized that it needed to move to a more digital business to meet the changing needs of its members. The organization turned to Fortinet's FortiGate Network Firewall to secure its internal and public technology platforms. While its cybersecurity posture improved as time went by, MICOOPE noticed problems around network availability. With many of its branches scattered throughout the country, there were times when connections failed, resulting in offices and ATMs going out of service. The situation created reputational risk that had to be addressed.

Availability and Security as Critical Features

With this critical situation, MICOOPE needed to optimize its connectivity infrastructure toward a software-defined wide-area network (SD-WAN). It had to secure connectivity at all branches, even if any of its ISP's telecommunication links failed. The new solution should also provide visibility and simple management, because the network was saturated, and it was difficult to identify what was causing the issues and how to fix them. It also needed to integrate more services, such as internal user authentication, to increase security.

MICOOPE evaluated several vendors and Fortinet was the only one that passed the tests. Fortinet came with the extra advantage of being able to integrate security capabilities across its solutions. In 2020, MICOOPE began migrating each office to a FortiGate Secure SD-WAN platform to enable a robust, reliable, and highly available network. "The process was quite agile and the configuration very simple, which is a highly positive aspect considering the complexity of our platform," says Armando Monzón, coordinator of cybersecurity at MICOOPE.



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Details

Customer: MICOOPE

Industry: Financial Services

Location: Guatemala

Business Impact

- Complete visibility of network traffic to optimize resources
- 100% of company's online services available to associates
- High availability leads to positive reputation among customers
- Scalability thanks to a seamless integration of Fortinet products
- Easy transition to enable remote work

Gaining 100% Availability for Business Continuity

MICOOPE now connects more than 250 branches using FortiGate Secure SD-WAN. The solution has allowed it to have 100% service availability with zero concerns around connectivity. “It no longer matters if a link is down because Fortinet’s solution manages multiple WAN links, and we can continue operating without affecting our reputation,” says Monzón. In addition, built-in capabilities allow the company to manage and secure several virtual private networks (VPNs) used for confidential data communication.

Monzón highlights the ease of management offered by the platform: “It is very stable and helps us to have immediate response times since many of the actions are automated. The system gives the IT department and our associates who visit the branches an improved user experience.” FortiManager and FortiAnalyzer (collectively known as the Fabric Management Center), provide visibility and centralized management of the entire network. “Previously, when they wanted to make a change, it was necessary to access each firewall independently. Now it is almost automatic. I make an adjustment and it instantly deploys to all the devices,” says Monzón. With FortiAnalyzer, MICOOPE benefits by optimizing security incident response, reporting, and security event analysis.

Stable and Scalable Platform

MICOOPE’s network infrastructure has enabled it to successfully cope with unexpected events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fortinet platform enabled MICOOPE to easily configure secure connections for its remote workers and ensure its online services will always be available. “Our associates had peace of mind because when all the offices were closed, they were able to make transactions and use the online platform without any inconvenience,” notes Monzón.

The scalability and product integration were another highlight. “If I have a new capability request, I only have to acquire a new Fortinet product and it can be integrated into the platform, having networkwide visibility and greater security,” explains Monzón.

For MICOOPE, it has been essential to have a networking and security partner that provides a robust solution and allows it to manage technological risk appropriately. “We have a very good experience with Fortinet. In addition to the ease of use and simplicity of management, we received excellent local support. This greatly adds value to the service,” concludes Monzón.

Solutions

- FortiGate Secure SD-WAN
- FortiGate Network Firewall
- FortiManager
- FortiAnalyzer

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