

CASE STUDY

Fortinet Enables Security at Scale as Food Manufacturer Prepares for Rapid Growth

One Food Manufacturer based in the United States is pioneering processes for more environmentally friendly food production. It has proven the merits of its proprietary techniques and continues to secure venture capital funding. The next stage in its business development is to make its products widely available. The manufacturer is, therefore, gearing up for rapid growth.

The company's director of IT explains: "When we started out, we used a cloud-based managed security setup that was well-suited for a small business but incapable of delivering the agility we need to scale. It is now clear that we need security solutions that can deliver much greater functionality, control, and usability across our two office locations and one manufacturing plant.

"However, given our growth ambitions, our security solution must be able to flex as we do and expand to wherever the business requires. Cost-at-scale is also an important factor, because the decentralized distribution model of the food industry means that we could eventually expand to many locations."

IP, IT, and OT

In addition to security considerations that come with any company preparing for growth, the Food Manufacturer faces two challenges that are particularly pertinent to its situation.

First is the scale of the cybersecurity threat facing the manufacturer. "As a research and development company, protecting intellectual property (IP) is essential," says the director of IT. "Our business is our food technology, and—given the revolutionary nature of our work—there are going to be plenty of bad actors interested in getting their hands on our patents. Sourcing best-of-breed, cutting-edge security technologies and adopting best practices from across industries is a fundamental part of our security posture."

The second key challenge is that the startup is a hybrid business: part research and development (R&D) company, part manufacturer. This fact means that security needs to extend across typical corporate environments, R&D functions, and manufacturing operations.

Longer term, the Food Manufacturer requires a security solution that can easily and safely expand into multiple information technology (IT) and operational technology (OT) systems. Importantly, the security system needs to be able to support IT/OT convergence, whereby enterprise servers, storage, and networking on the one hand and manufacturing devices, systems, and equipment on the other are merging to enable better business insights, processes, and controls.



"When I project out from where our business is today to where we want to be in the future, it is clear that Fortinet has the portfolio, experience, and service to take us where we want to go."

– Director of IT, Food Manufacturer

Details

Customer: Food Manufacturer

Industry: Manufacturing

Location: United States

Business Impact

- Secures Food Manufacturer's valuable IP and patents
- Provides the agility, control, and visibility for secure growth at speed

Highly Integrated and Automated Security From Fortinet

Having reviewed the solutions available on the market, it became apparent that Fortinet is best placed to deliver the agility, control, and cost points that the Food Manufacturer requires. The first phase of the company's security transformation is now complete, with the Fortinet platform approach rolled out across the company's campuses.

The food manufacturer is now leveraging three core Fortinet Security Fabric products: The FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall (NGFW) delivers industry-leading enterprise security at the network edge and is capable of scaling rapidly with full visibility and threat protection. FortiAP wireless access points along with FortiSwitch Ethernet switches provide stable, reliable, and secure connectivity that is easily managed from the FortiGate's single-pane-of-glass console. Fabric integration with local-area network (LAN) management on the FortiGate enables a simple-to-manage architecture with a single focal point for management and configuration. FortiManager supports centralized management at scale, best practices compliance, and workflow automation to provide better protection against breaches.

Through these investments, the Food Manufacturer has laid the foundations for leveraging the Fortinet Security Fabric, a security approach in which tightly integrated Fortinet solutions continuously assess risks and automatically adjust to provide comprehensive real-time protection across the digital attack surface.

For the IT director, Fortinet is a good fit because Fortinet's direction of travel matches that of the Food Manufacturer. "There are various offerings for Layers 2 and 3 on the market, and you can even find some good options for Layers 4 through 7. However, finding a company like Fortinet that combines all of that with a focus on industrial control systems and the right cost-at-scale is very rare. When I project out from where our business is today to where we want to be in the future, it is clear that Fortinet has the portfolio, experience, and service to take us where we want to go."

Lower Costs, Greater Visibility, and Frictionless Delivery

Even at this early stage of its partnership with Fortinet, the Food Manufacturer is seeing impressive results. The systems implementation and core networking deployment have been delivered under budget and are delivering greater visibility and control than was possible on the company's legacy network environment.

"The project has delivered everything we hoped," says the director of IT. "We have a greatly enhanced ability to control VPN profiles and to segment our environment with virtual LANs [VLANs] and access control lists. We have also achieved the agility we need. For instance, it took just a couple of hours to build in several key integration points with our private cloud provider, while our services are now interconnected and talking to each other."

Another key benefit has been Fortinet's speed of delivery, having rolled out the project from order to delivery in just one week. This ability to work rapidly has been particularly important for the director of IT because he heads a team that operates at a similarly fast pace. Being able to deliver the solution in a timely way is seen as a core capability for the future, as it will help the Food Manufacturer during the periods of rapid growth the company and its investors anticipate.

Business Impact (contd.)

- Delivers frictionless user experiences and rapid deployment
- Lays the foundation for secure IT/OT convergence

Solutions

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall
- FortiAP
- FortiSwitch
- FortiManager

"With Fortinet, we have a partner for the future. Fortinet's solution portfolio and its vision of a Security Fabric running across the enterprise is exactly the holistic approach to security that is needed for tomorrow's operational environment."

- Director of IT, Food Manufacturer

In the IT director's view, he works for the IT team, rather than the other way around. As such, his job is in part to ensure that everyone on the team has the tools they need to work effectively and efficiently. As he explains: "If I bring in a technology that increases their workload, or which creates a burden for them, then I have not done my job. With Fortinet, my people have not come to me with a single problem, even though prior to the rollout, none of us had experience working with Fortinet systems. The solution has made all our lives easier, reduced friction, and brought us the feature set we need as a business."

Strong Partnership

As a new company in a developing space and with a novel approach to every element of its business, the Food Manufacturer is constantly asking itself whether it is on the right path. When working with a new partner like Fortinet, this translates into questions around customer service. Does the partner listen to the startup's concerns and understand them? Does it escalate issues when required? Does it internalize concerns and make them its own? In short, does the partner act like an extension of the business?

For the director of IT, these questions are often overlooked, but they are essential. "The relationship with the vendor is just as important as its hardware or software," he says. "It is the partnership that is going to carry you through the tough times and is the difference between simply having a company you buy a kit from and one that works with you and grows as you do. So far, I feel like that is what we have with Fortinet—when the team needs assistance, Fortinet is always ready to help and make us feel appreciated."

Future Plans

The Food Manufacturer's partnership with Fortinet is only just getting started. As IT/OT convergence continues and Internet-of-Things (IoT) devices link up different parts of the organization and enable new data-driven processes, being able to secure the entire interconnected architecture will become more and more important.

"With Fortinet, we have a partner for the future," concludes the director of IT. "Fortinet's solution portfolio and its vision of a Security Fabric running across the enterprise is exactly the holistic approach to security that is needed for tomorrow's operational environment. We are already looking at how we can take the next step of our journey with Fortinet by moving to an SD-Branch architecture that leverages the FortiGate Secure SD-WAN capabilities. Also, we are evaluating the FortiNAC network access control solution.

"The 'zero-trust' approach enabled by these technologies greatly appeals given the nature of our networks and the IP we must protect. We are looking to reach a point where we have complete visibility into every device, user, and sensor across the IT/OT spectrum, so we know at all times exactly what is going on in the network. These are still only early days in our relationship with Fortinet, and we cannot wait to grow with them in what should be some exciting years ahead."



www.fortinet.com