

Switching from MPLS to Forcepoint NGFW and SD-WAN Helps Big Star Secure its Retail Chain

International blue jeans and clothing chain rapidly and cost-effectively extends core connectivity to 200 stores with strong network security.

Based on its slogan, “Your Life, Your Jeans,” you can believe nothing comes between blue jeans and customer service for Big Star, Poland’s largest clothing chain and seller of Blue Star jeans. The company’s mission to deliver a great customer experience required robust network connections from its core data center out to its retail stores to support multi-region distribution of pricing, music and point-of-sale (POS) data. Rather than continue leasing expensive multi-protocol label switching (MPLS) lines, Big Star made the switch to SD-WAN with Forcepoint, integrating cost-effective local ISP links with Forcepoint NGFW security to centrally manage and secure multiple sites. With Forcepoint NGFW and SD-WAN connecting and protecting the hub and the spokes of its clothing empire, Big Star no longer worries whether security fits the business strategy, so it can better focus on ensuring a fashionable fit for its customers.

CUSTOMER PROFILE:

Founded in 1979, Poland’s largest clothing chain sells its flagship Blue Star jeans in more than 200 shops in three countries in Europe.

INDUSTRY:

Retail

HQ COUNTRY:

Poland

PRODUCTS:

- › Forcepoint NGFW
- › Forcepoint SD-WAN

Founded in 1979, Big Star recently celebrated its 40th year in business as one of Poland's most respected and well-known clothing brands. The rare clothing chain that is entirely locally owned in Poland, the company established more than 200 retail stores in three European markets (Poland, Belarus and Slovakia) and recently launched a new online mercantile.

As the company expanded into e-commerce, protection of confidential consumer information, customer loyalty data and retail store applications became critical. Big Star also needed to secure the connection between its headquarters and satellite shops while maintaining up-to-the-minute pricing, music lists and other POS data to drive sales and stellar customer experiences.

Recently, the expiration of expensive MPLS service agreements Big Star relied on for store-to-headquarters connectivity provided the company with the opportunity to look for a more cost-effective solution. This became especially important when COVID-19 put pressure on the security team to ensure a high return on every operating and capital expense. Furthermore, the existing architecture didn't provide central administration of the WAN and LAN together or visibility into the behavior of users on the network. The company decided there had to be a better option.

Easy migration from legacy networks to flexible NGFW and SD-WAN without sacrificing security

Several years ago, Big Star deployed Forcepoint Next Generation Firewall to protect its employees, network and data. Today, the retailer has a cluster of Forcepoint NGFW appliances creating secure networks for the datacenter and corporate workstations, implemented by trusted solution provider Monolit IT.

When the opening to update Big Star's network security architecture arose, Monolit IT recommended Big Star consider Forcepoint's flexible SD-WAN capabilities. Rolling out Forcepoint NGFW to its retail stores would enable Big Star to quickly and accurately replicate SD-WAN configurations at multiple locations and centrally manage the sites, while minimizing cost and administrative overhead.

As the pandemic forced the business to tighten its fiscal belt, the security and IT team at Big Star quickly tested Forcepoint's SD-WAN technology in a proof-of-concept (POC) that took just a few weeks to complete. The POC involved testing connections of the retail stores with the core system, observing stability and testing device performance, according to Filip Janczar, manager of IT security at Big Star.

Forcepoint SD-WAN security drives down costs, raises productivity at retail locations

Migrating stores from MPLS to SD-WAN freed Big Star to use multiple connections from different ISPs at each site, secure each of those links with the industry's top-rated security and manage all of it together from one Forcepoint console. The combination of Forcepoint NGFW and SD-WAN untangled the complexity of the legacy network to maintain throughput, increase operational efficiency and lower overall costs.

In addition, Forcepoint NGFW provided more network stability at these shops and helped maintain constant, secure connections with headquarters. The Big Star team used a USB flash drive to complete installation by connecting with Forcepoint's NGFW Security Management Center (SMC) at headquarters. After the initial connection with the SMC, Big Star simply uploaded the security policy, and the branch store was ready to use Forcepoint's SD-WAN technology.



Challenges

Maintain robust network connections from core data center to retail stores.

Extend network security protection to keep remote sites safe without heavy manual lift or budgets.

Support and update global distribution of pricing, music and POS data.

Improve performance of cloud-based apps and data services from core to the edge of network.



Approach

Deploy Forcepoint NGFW and migrate from MPLS to Forcepoint SD-WAN.

Recalled Janczar, "Since we deployed Forcepoint's firewalls we already knew that the network security technology was capable. We trusted Monolit IT's architecture recommendations and the combination of Forcepoint NGFW and SD-WAN turned out to be exactly what we needed. The implementation was really easy and admin friendly: we just needed to connect the device on the retail store side to the Internet and the network switch. And we could easily replicate the combination of speed, usability and security for different stores."

Forcepoint NGFW Security Management Center is better than one-size-fits-all

The ease of use of SD-WAN is most apparent through the manageability of the highly secure network. Instead of repetitive or manual tasks, Big Star team members are now able to centrally administer multiple retail stores within the single SMC console. The team can set custom security policies, rules and controls depending on each location's requirements. SMC shows the current connection status of the VPN tunnels between headquarters and the clothing stores. The security team can define whether VPN tunnels should work in active/active or active/standby modes and balance this network traffic with QoS as required. Greater stability of the VPN connection is provided by the possibility of using multiple internet connections in different technologies as needed, such as fiber, DSL or LTE.

"Deploying Forcepoint's SD-WAN was like copying and pasting network security configurations across our sites," said Janczar. "The SMC gives me visibility to all installed firewalls from one place. I know right away whether a given branch store is connected to the headquarters. We can now implement one security policy for all remote stores at the same time, so we don't waste time logging into each device separately."

Strategic security partnerships are in style

Forcepoint's cybersecurity approach to detecting, preventing and remediating data breaches is helping Big Star plan for the future one leg at a time. Forcepoint's focus on helping customers understand user interaction with data on their networks is a perfect fit for Big Star's strategy to sustain growth online and in its retail stores. Even as the pandemic has reduced traffic to shopping centers in Poland, the company is positioned to securely build out its online presence and drive efficiencies throughout its retail infrastructure.

"The Forcepoint portfolio offers several notable user-centric solutions and services that can greatly improve the security of Big Star," Janczar observed. "We've already been working with Monolit for more than ten years and we see a bright future with them and with Forcepoint as our core team of trusted security advisors."

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FILIP JANCZAR, MANAGER OF IT SECURITY, BIG STAR



Results

Deploy Forcepoint SD-WAN and NGFW to branch locations without an on-site technician.

Eliminate manual setup as devices automatically download configuration from Forcepoint.

Replicate configuration for multiple remote branches and centralize administration in one console.

Use multiple connections from different ISPs and protect them with top-rated network security.

Quickly update and publish policies to all devices, globally with a single click.

