For Apple Reseller, Dimension is Cream of the Crop

CHALLENGE

EpiCentre is the first and largest Apple Premium Reseller (APR) in Southeast Asia. Established in Singapore in 2002, they were the first APR to deliver a complete range of Apple products and an in-store experience true to that of the original Apple stores in the US. The company also carries the most comprehensive variety of Apple and third party accessories, a significant draw which poses a unique challenge: smooth and regulated bandwidth is absolutely critical in order for customers to successfully test EpiCentre’s range of Apple desktops, tablets, iPhones and accessories.

Since 2008, EpiCentre relied on in-house network solutions and security provided by an Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Singapore. This meant that the organization’s entire network, including security and bandwidth - as well as corporate and customer data - was handled by the ISP.

When Tony Sim assumed the role of IT Manager for EpiCentre in 2012, he realized that the company’s legacy solutions did not stand up to the challenges posed by the rapidly advancing global cyber environment. He remarked that it typically took two to three weeks to receive a full system health report from the ISP, a relatively simple task that should take only a few minutes. “This meant that most of the time, we had no idea how our networks were performing, and if our data was adequately protected from cyber threats.” Additionally, EpiCentre’s IT staff could not immediately amend network policies and allocate additional bandwidth to stores that saw high traffic during Apple product launches or increased sale periods. With these issues, and the fact that cybersecurity threats were becoming more rampant in Asia, EpiCentre decided it was time to look for solutions that allowed them more control over their network performance and security.
SOLUTION

WatchGuard’s Unified Thread Management (UTM) solution provided a host of next-generation security features and fast throughput speeds that were essential for both stores and headquarters. To the XTM 505 at their data center, XTM 330 at HQ and XTM 25 units throughout their retail locations, the versatile UTM solution added Intrusion Prevention Service (IPS), Application Control, WebBlocker, spamBlocker, Reputation Enabled Defense, and Gateway Antivirus (GAV). Additionally, Dimension, WatchGuard’s logging and reporting tool, provided Tony real-time visibility into their entire network and the ability to distill key network security threats. “Once Dimension was up, we were finally able to conduct a full assessment of our network, leading us to identify a number of red flags,” remarked Tony.

Unrestricted social media applications, online games and content streaming by internal staff was found to be one of the main drivers for why EpiCentre’s network was not performing at optimal speed for daily business processes. Moreover, their previous network policies did not block access to pornography, torrent sites, and unauthorized downloads. With these issues at hand, the IT team leveraged their WatchGuard solutions to implement critical policies and security measures. To begin, EpiCentre established parental controls for all storefront display units. This ensured that customers could only surf Apple approved content and sites. Storefront Wi-Fi access was also limited to business hours.

The flexibility of WatchGuard’s UTM solution also allowed EpiCentre’s IT managers to enact policies based on the needs of different departments. For example, access to social media, streaming, and downloading was granted only to the marketing team as they needed these tools for research and monitoring of new marketing campaigns. Websites deemed as non-essential were restricted to conserve bandwidth and minimize threats. Additionally, third party vendors handling Point of Sale (POS) systems and customer metrics were given specific ports of access so that EpiCentre could monitor these separately for suspicious activities, intrusion, or malware.

RESULTS

A cost analysis breakdown revealed that implementation of WatchGuard’s solutions for a period of three years allowed EpiCentre to save upwards of $50,000, compared to the initial ISP costs. Ultimately, WatchGuard allowed EpiCentre to recoup their entire investment within the short span of nine months. “With a combination of WatchGuard’s UTM and Dimension solutions, my team could view the entire network health in real-time, investigate chokepoints and implement policies to solve the problem. All of this could be done in less than an hour.” EpiCentre’s IT team now benefits from the ease of use and improved efficiency of a single solution for endpoint security, network visibility and management. In Tony’s words: “WatchGuard has never failed us. Even when the entire ISP network was down because of a cable damaged by rats, the WatchGuard system and firewalls were still fully functional.”

ABOUT WATCHGUARD

WatchGuard Technologies, Inc. is a global leader of integrated, multi-function business security solutions that intelligently combine industry standard hardware, best-of-breed security features, and policy-based management tools. WatchGuard provides easy-to-use, but enterprise-powerful protection to hundreds of thousands of businesses worldwide. WatchGuard is headquartered in Seattle, Washington with offices throughout North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, and Latin America. To learn more, visit www.watchguard.com

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