



Pharmaceutical Wholesaler Securely Connects with 125 Retail Outlets

A Case Study in VPN and Network Security

BACKGROUND

The medical, pharmaceutical, and disability products wholesaler and distributor Escapo (www.escapo.be), founded in Mechelen, Belgium in 1964, supplies products to pharmacies, medical retailers, and hospitals.

The company's 125 customer locations, each with its own Linux servers with PC clients, are connected to Escapo's central infrastructure via a branch office VPN and Firebox® X Edge, which allows direct electronic payments from the cash registers over the Internet. Loyalty card balance records, database replication, and Internet and email traffic are all channeled centrally via the VPN to Mechelen in a process known as split tunneling.

CHALLENGE

IT department manager Karin Vercammen said, "It's essential that we offer our customers a secure network environment, first and foremost to safeguard sensitive patient information, but also to keep the total cost of ownership down. Before the WatchGuard® architecture was put in place, our helpdesk was almost overrun with workstations clogged up with spyware and adware. Today, these problems are the exception rather than the rule, even though the number of workstations has grown exponentially to over 600. This is exactly why we chose WatchGuard's powerful firewalls."

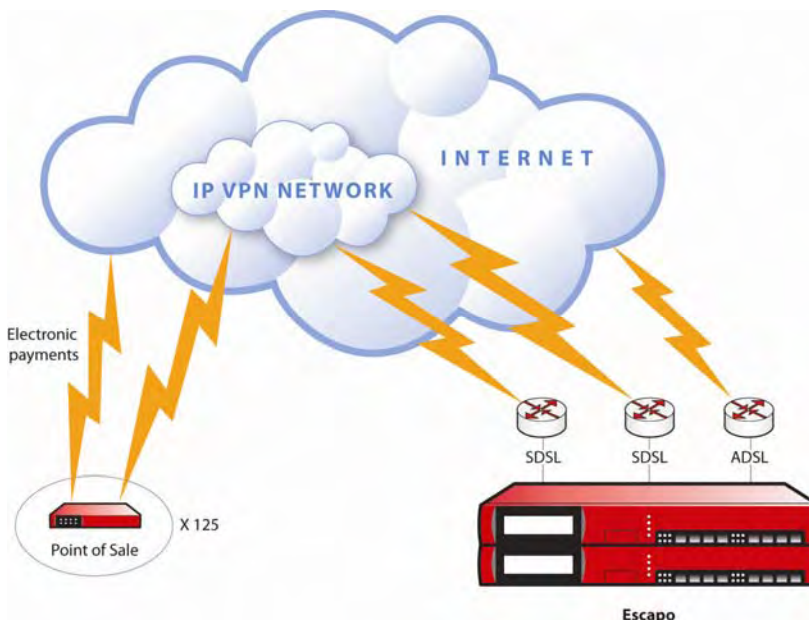
Escapo's online customers also use ViaNova and ViaCerta applications to place orders. "We receive orders via FTP, and then process these on our own systems," explains IT worker Tom Emmerechts. "We also give them feedback on products we can't supply, so they can source them elsewhere rather than letting their own customers down."

One unusual feature of Escapo's operations is its highly automated warehouse, with the vast majority of orders being picked by SDA, TDA and OSR robots controlled by the SAP® enterprise resource planning solution.

WATCHGUARD® SOLUTION

Managing firewalls used to entail a great deal of time and effort. "Making configuration decisions was very time-consuming, because we had to run configuration files on three firewalls," says Emmerechts. "Also, we wanted to connect medical supply stores to our network infrastructure – this had to be done securely, and in our previous set-up, that would have required a fourth firewall."

Escapo called in its IT consultant Eric Billiard of AG Solution, (www.ag-solution.be), who carried out a detailed review of its requirements and recommended acquiring the WatchGuard extensible threat management (XTM) appliance.



BENEFITS

In order to guarantee network availability, the company required appliance redundancy – what WatchGuard terms a "high-availability cluster." If the primary Firebox fails, a secondary one quickly takes over, thus providing Escapo and its customers with optimum protection against spam, harmful websites, and other online threats at all times.

The XTM solution provides a greater degree of protection than the previous solution, which involved three separate appliances. Now all functions are consolidated into a single system with built-in redundancy. “This saves us a huge amount of administration time, and we’re quite a bit more flexible,” says Emmerechts. “The configuration is also a lot simpler, since there’s now only one appliance involved.”

The choice of WatchGuard has allowed customers to use a cheaper Internet connection, and with 125 customers, this results in a considerable overall saving. Before the system was implemented, it was calculated that the savings could amount to more than €200,000 a year. “In this respect, Firebox® X Edge’s support for dynamic IP addresses is a big advantage,” says Emmerechts. “WatchGuard XTM makes it possible to create stable, permanent VPN tunnels with dynamic IP addresses.”

spamBlocker (Activity since last restart)			
Messages confirmed as spam:	4.555.367 (92,85%)	Messages blocked:	4.554.886 (92,84%)
Messages marked as bulk email:	247.604 (5,05%)	Messages tagged:	3.763 (0,08%)
Messages suspected as spam:	3.346 (0,07%)	Messages quarantined:	0 (0%)
Messages not spam:	99.736 (2,03%)	Messages on white/black list:	55.663 (1,13%)
Total messages processed:	4.906.053		

WatchGuard spamBlocker stats: Practically no false positives and still 97% score on Spam/Bulk, without a difficult-to-maintain blacklist

Because WatchGuard uses recurrent pattern detection technology for protection, the quantity of spam that gets through is minimal. Emmerechts adds, “Tests showed that there were almost no false positives with WatchGuard. We didn’t need to spend time creating long, difficult-to-maintain blacklists and whitelists, despite the fact that pharmacists commonly stock a number of products that generate a lot of spam, such as Viagra®.”



XTM has also been a good choice in terms of scalability. Because everything is based on a single appliance, licence costs do not increase as the number of users behind the firewall rises. Karin Verammen adds, “The fact that WatchGuard was such a good value for the money obviously played an important part.”

For more information about WatchGuard security solutions, visit www.watchguard.com or contact your reseller.

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ABOUT WATCHGUARD

Since 1996, WatchGuard Technologies has provided reliable, easy to manage security appliances to hundreds of thousands of businesses worldwide. Our Firebox X family of unified threat management (UTM) solutions provides the best combination of strong, reliable, multi-layered security with the best ease of use in its class. Our newest product line – the WatchGuard SSL – makes secure remote access easy and affordable, regardless of the size of your network. All products are backed by LiveSecurity® Service, a ground-breaking support and maintenance program. WatchGuard is a privately owned company, headquartered in Seattle, Washington, with offices throughout North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, and Latin America. For more information, please visit www.watchguard.com.

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