



Retailer Protects Bottom Line with VPN

A Case Study in Network Security

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Pamela Pee, IT Specialist, Goodwill Industries of Northeast Indiana, Inc.

BACKGROUND

As a not-for-profit retailer, Goodwill Industries of Northeast Indiana, Inc. needs to wring high efficiency from a tight IT budget. Profit from store operations funnels to the organization's social services mission: to help people with disabilities find jobs. But at the same time, Goodwill faces all of the challenges faced by any retailer with nine locations, over \$7 million in annual sales, and approximately a half-million transactions annually. There's even an online division.

Fortunately, Goodwill has a solid relationship with Intrasect Technologies, a managed services and IT consultancy firm that primarily serves northern Indiana. An Expert Partner with WatchGuard, Intrasect has a special affinity for helping not-for-profits.

CHALLENGE

Goodwill's nine locations are geographically widespread, many of them 30-40 miles apart. The cost of connecting them via dedicated circuits was simply not viable for a not-for-profit organization. Yet according to Pamela Pee, IT Specialist, “We needed to communicate better. When I came on-board, the stores didn't even have PCs. It was fax machines and phone calls. We needed to get to data feeds,

online forms and emails. So one of the first things I did was to get together with Intrasec on a plan to get our locations connected.”

WATCHGUARD® SOLUTION

Intrasec helped Goodwill roll out a back-office VPN built around a WatchGuard Firebox Core™ X750e appliance at the corporate data center. The end-points at the stores were originally served by older Firebox units, but are gradually being replaced by newer WatchGuard Edge™ X10e and X20e devices as budget allows. The applications are mostly general office applications, running over Citrix sessions. Now, says Pee, “The stores connect to the home office to upload the sales numbers every night. We’re importing those into our accounting applications and running reports. Each store also has a time-clock system that plugs into the WatchGuard device and they also go over the VPN.”

With the new connectivity, Goodwill Industries of Northeast Indiana, Inc. is now able to tap into shopgoodwill.com, an online auction site. Explains Pee, “As people donate items to our stores, some of those items will end up on our online auction site. Our Covington and Brooklyn Avenue locations have employees there taking pictures, and posting the items online for people to bid on. At the Covington location we have ten PCs and users who are on them all day. They’re constantly protected by the WatchGuard appliance.”

BENEFITS

Solving the connectivity problem was job number one, but Goodwill and Intrasec identified several other advantages from the WatchGuard solution.

Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Because Goodwill deals with people with disabilities, they are accredited by CARF, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. The rigorous process takes place every three years. Data security is a key piece of the technology section, and covers antivirus protection, backup policies, security measures, disaster recovery and procedures to ensure confidentiality. “We definitely mention WatchGuard in our CARF accreditation,” says Pee. “It’s proof that we’re protected.”

Centralized Management of a Distributed Enterprise

With a one-person IT shop supporting nine locations, Goodwill relies on the WatchGuard System Manager to keep their IT director off the road. Declares Pee, “For me, it’s a huge time saving, especially when our farthest store is an hour away. I can instantly see if I’ve got a location down. If I can’t get to the WatchGuard box, it’s usually an Internet problem and I have them reset their modem. Nine times out of ten that fixes it. If it doesn’t, then we’re making a phone call to the ISP. If I can get to the WatchGuard device, it’s a problem with the computer or with something else.”

Greater Efficiencies Through Standardization

For Goodwill’s IT-services partner, WatchGuard has been a key to the business as well. Mike Shira, Sales Manager for Intrasec, explains the company’s longstanding relationship: “WatchGuard has been part of our footprint for seven or eight years now. With them, we can go across any type of environment, from a 3-user office to a government or educational institutional with 1500 users. And they have a very good platform where a device can be upgraded to a higher-level box, rather than having to buy a whole new appliance.

“We use WatchGuard exclusively. All of our technicians have bought into that. We can work with a consistent appliance across the board. We know how they interface with networks, and how to keep them current. And they’re very dependable boxes. There are less expensive solutions, there are more expensive

solutions, but are there better solutions? We go back to the ease of use, the quality of support, the simple fact that WatchGuard does the job.”

‘Not One Bit of Problems’

Goodwill’s IT Specialist sums it up from her perspective: “Ever since we connected the stores to the corporate office, the WatchGuard appliances have been a piece of the puzzle I really don't have to worry about. That’s important, since I'm a one-person shop. I've not had one bit of problems with the WatchGuard boxes. I'm trying to think of a time I contacted anyone from Intrasect because of a WatchGuard firewall problem. I can count it on one hand, probably less than two fingers.

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ADDRESS:
505 Fifth Avenue South
Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98104

WEB:
www.watchguard.com

U.S. SALES:
1.800.734.9905

INTERNATIONAL SALES:
+1.206.613.0895

ABOUT WATCHGUARD

Since 1996, WatchGuard has been building award-winning unified threat management (UTM) network security solutions that combine firewall, VPN and security services to protect networks and the businesses they power. We recently launched the next generation: extensible threat management (XTM) solutions featuring reliable, all-in-one security, scaled and priced to meet the unique security needs of every enterprise. Our products are backed by 15000 partners representing WatchGuard in 120 countries. More than a half million signature red WatchGuard security appliances have already been deployed worldwide in industries including retail, education, and healthcare. WatchGuard is headquartered in Seattle, Washington, with offices throughout North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, and Latin America.

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