



Construction Group Selects WatchGuard for Fast Connectivity to Project Offices

A Case Study in Network Security

“The big thing about the WatchGuard appliances is that there is none of this continual rebooting to get them to work. They just sit there and do their job happily.” **Nick Dhaliwal, IT Supervisor, Grocon**

BACKGROUND

From humble beginnings in the 1950's as a small Victorian family concreting business, Grocon has grown to become one of Australia's leading privately-owned development and construction groups. It's a company with a big reputation for bold buildings and a history of delivering on its promises.

During the last decade Grocon has been involved in many of Australia's iconic building projects, including the Eureka Tower in Melbourne and the redevelopment of the heritage-listed Sydney GPO at No. 1 Martin Place. During the same period the company has expanded into New South Wales, Queensland, and internationally with an office in Dubai.

CHALLENGE

The nature of the construction industry means that Grocon is constantly setting up and pulling down project offices. Whenever the company wins a new contract, a site office is established for the one or two year project duration, after which the office is closed and the team moves on to the next assignment.

It's a cycle that places heavy demands on Grocon's IT systems. The need for frequently changing, secure remote connections to corporate information systems plus enough power to cope with the exchange of graphic-laden plans and documentation mean that network speed and flexibility are

essential. For example, the early 2009 Victorian bush fires resulted in massive building and reconstruction projects which required Grocon to set up an additional 12 offices within the space of a month.

Of Grocon's total base of employees and contractors, approximately 400 regular IT users need to be kept connected to corporate systems.

WATCHGUARD® SOLUTION

For the four years during 2005-2009 Grocon addressed the problem of remote connectivity with a WatchGuard Firebox virtual private network (VPN) solution. Comprised of four separate Firebox® appliances it offered two crucial benefits: the quick and easy creation of new connections to far-flung sites and a secure interface to the outside world as it funnelled all of Grocon's incoming and outgoing traffic.

Web filtering and reporting capabilities also helped Grocon to better understand how and why staff members were accessing the Internet. Grocon's IT Supervisor, Nick Dhaliwal explains, "The reports showed us what sites users were going to and allowed us to analyse how much of the company Internet use was work-related versus non-related. Once people realised that we could see what they were doing, they began to apply their own brakes. As a result, the ratio of personal use to work use has dramatically improved."

By 2009 the demands of a growing business led Grocon to the decision that it was time to upgrade. The increase in number of remote connections meant that security was a continual concern, leading Grocon to investigate alternative options such as RSA tokens.

However, the release of the new WatchGuard SSL appliance – a VPN solution with extensive authentication capabilities – helped address the problems caused when users wanted to access the corporate network from home using personal computers with no Grocon software installed.

"I've used WatchGuard products for about ten years and found them to be very stable. The Fireboxes that we've had at Grocon for the last four years have been pivotal to our network and they've always remained reliable. But the WatchGuard SSL appliance is newer and more versatile. Its authentication setup offered what we needed," says Dhaliwal.

In April 2009, Grocon consulted WatchGuard partner, Harbour IT, and acquired a WatchGuard SSL device with a ten tunnel license and the WatchGuard LiveSecurity Service which proactively safeguards the organisation against potential threats.

BENEFITS

Dhaliwal notes, "We did the implementation ourselves and had the WatchGuard SSL VPN appliance up and running within a day. It's a barrier box between the real world and us, but it also handles all the VPN tunnels from site to site. So, wherever we haven't got a dedicated or point-to-point link, we can put in a Firebox X Edge and configure a tunnel literally within 30 minutes. The ease and efficiency of doing this has given us an immediate boost in security."

Internal security measures have also been enhanced with management able to specify or restrict staff access to applications as required.

Within the next two months Dhaliwal expects all of Grocon's VPN access to have moved off the Fireboxes and onto the WatchGuard SSL device, after which the core WatchGuard Firebox X 1000 will be upgraded and retained to act as an internal firewall. It's the complete WatchGuard solution that Dhaliwal had hoped for.

“The big thing about the WatchGuard appliances is that there is none of this continual rebooting to get them to work. They just sit there and do their job happily,” Dhaliwal concludes.

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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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