

CASE STUDY

Latin America's Largest Consumer Cooperative Ensures Connectivity and a Secure Transition to the Cloud with Fortinet Solutions

Coop is the largest consumer cooperative in Latin America. More than 1 million members benefit from the chain's supermarkets and drugstores. The cooperative currently has 6,000 employees spread across 32 supermarkets, 40 drugstores, a distribution center in the city of São Bernardo do Campo (SP), and an administrative headquarters.

While Coop was expanding its business, it noticed security problems and operational instabilities involving its internal network. Connection issues caused by external factors, such as cable theft and power outages, directly impacted the stores' operation. Stores were constantly affected by the lack of connection, especially during crowded periods like weekends and holidays. With a traditional network, the costs were too high to justify a backup link, leaving the infrastructure and support teams on high alert for connectivity outages.

Clear Benefits for the Short-Term

To help with the connectivity challenges, Coop contacted Safetyware, a Fortinet partner who deployed the FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall (NGFW) with Fortinet Secure SD-WAN on new Coop drugstores, to test the performance and results. Previous technology was inefficient in cost and function, particularly for smaller operations like drugstores. Not being able to run the business properly would result in significant losses.

After the first testing of Fortinet's solutions, the company realized it met its needs for secure and dedicated communication technology that would enable smaller branches to operate wirelessly with less cost and high availability. As Coop noticed the success of the implementation, they replicated it in all chain drugstores. "Over six months, we evaluated how the solution worked, and the performance was much better than the one we had in our bigger stores. The drugstores operated with two links and did not experience operational downtime," explains César Lino Barbato, Infrastructure, Services, and Support Coordinator at Coop.

After the successful results in the drugstores, it was time to scale up Fortinet's solution to the whole operation. Coop decided to change its traditional communications links in all its stores. The company relied on FortiGate and Fortinet Secure SD-WAN in its main office, support areas, drugstores, supermarkets, and gas stations.

The company has 80 Fortinet Secure SD-WAN locations deployed to guarantee the security and fluidity of its operation. Since Coop deployed Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, communication between its stores has become more robust, and the connectivity problems with traditional links have been resolved.



"Fortinet adds a layer of protection for all of our applications and stores, giving them high availability and security across both cloud and on-premises environments."

César Lino Barbato
Infrastructure, Services and Support Coordinator
Coop

Details

Customer: Coop

Industry: Retail

Location: Brazil

Number of Secure SD-WAN Locations: 80

Business Impact

- Mitigated connectivity failures in drugstores, supermarkets, and distribution centers
- Allowed mobility and ease of connection for employees moving between stores
- Centralized monitoring and control of the whole operation

"Today, we no longer have connectivity issues in our stores since we have two to three links per operational unit. Traditional links were expensive, so we cut costs and improved performance and security with Fortinet Secure SD-WAN," Lino claims.

Better User Experience

Coop sought support in other areas to elevate the customer and employee experience. In solving day-to-day challenges, such as the requirement for a reliable and secure internet connection for employees and clients, deploying a Wi-Fi network using the FortiAP access points and the FortiSwitch Ethernet switches was essential.

With these solutions, the company optimized the Wi-Fi connection and provided high-performance connectivity with secure access. Coop deployed over 350 FortiAP access points in its stores and offices and was able to simplify IT routines while maintaining the security and the quality of the communications. "If someone accesses the network in a non-secure area, we can identify and prevent any types of risk," ensures Lino.

Coop also chose to rely on the FortiAnalyzer Cloud solution to gain visibility of the security operation. With this solution, Coop now has real-time reporting and control. Thus, all collected data is stored in the cloud, and the storage capacity can be expanded if needed. Additionally, FortiAnalyzer enables data backup for recovery in case of disasters.

"The gains with Fortinet solutions went beyond savings and financial returns. They made everyday life easier for our IT team and for the users who connect to the Wi-Fi networks in offices and stores," says Lino.

Guaranteed Security for the Cloud Journey

In 2021, Coop faced a new project: migrating its applications to a cloud environment. The company started using SAP technology on the Google Cloud Platform (GCP), with two FortiGate VM firewalls implemented for security.

About one year later, with the support of another Fortinet partner, Darede, Coop migrated to the SAP cloud environment using Amazon Web Services (AWS) as the cloud provider. To make this change, Coop left some SAP workloads within GCP and another within AWS while migrating SAP workloads and all its servers to the new AWS environment, making AWS the cloud provider for most of its applications.

Nevertheless, Coop still operates in a multi-cloud environment since it uses Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) and Microsoft Azure for different services. "The support from Fortinet and its partner made this complex cloud journey easier. Thanks to the FortiGate VM, we can rest assured that our services and servers are well protected from cyberthreats with high performance and efficacy," says Lino.

FortiGate VM also allows Coop's technical team to have excellent visibility about the data going through their servers on the cloud. "Once the firewall was set up in the cloud, we started to work with it the same way we do with a firewall in a physical environment. My team works with Darede to create the required rules and connections in the firewall implemented in AWS. The entire migration is happening in parallel with the store's operation, which has not been affected. Fortinet adds a layer of protection for all of our applications and stores, giving them high availability and security across both cloud and on-premises environments," says Lino.

Business Impact (cont.)

- Reduced system deployment time and cost in new locations
- Enabled the journey to the cloud safely and without impacting operations

Solutions

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall
- FortiGate VM
- Fortinet Secure SD-WAN
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAP
- FortiAnalyzer

"The gains with Fortinet solutions went beyond savings and financial returns. They made everyday life easier for our IT team and for the users who connect to the Wi-Fi networks in offices and stores."

César Lino Barbato
Infrastructure, Services, and Support Coordinator
Coop



Lino also stresses the importance of cybersecurity for the cloud environment and the need for a complete and easily manageable solution. "AWS delivers the basics in terms of protection and firewall, but we needed the most advanced protection in the cloud. FortiGate does this while giving us even greater data control and visibility, providing everything we need to know in a unified platform."

Successful Solutions Embedded New Plans

The new network and security platform provided Coop with growth opportunities and the chance to expand its business into new horizons. With Fortinet's solutions, the company is taking on new projects focused on e-commerce and new stores in residential condominiums in the metropolitan area of São Paulo called Coop Aqui.

According to Lino, managing an expanded operation like this would not be workable without Fortinet solutions, both from a financial and a security standpoint. "In the past, we wouldn't have been able to open small stores in several residential condominiums with a dedicated link; it wouldn't have been feasible. With Fortinet, we were able to implement this quickly enough and expand our sales," he concludes.

Furthermore, Coop intends to open three new supermarkets and at least six new drugstores soon. By relying on Fortinet solutions, Coop achieved the required network performance and security levels to expand its operations.

The company plans to implement the FortiNAC network access control solution soon to oversee and protect network access to all connected digital assets. In addition, Coop intends to rely on FortiManager, which allows consistent security in hybrid and complex environments while leveraging a unified management of its on-premises and cloud solutions.



www.fortinet.com