

CASE STUDY

Global Food Services Company Protects Confidential Communications with Secure VPN Tunnels on Azure

Every day huge volumes of people depend on this company to provide their breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and supply cups of steaming gourmet coffee. With its many thousands of staff, the food services giant has a massive presence around the globe.

An absolutely enormous number of meals are served each year across many different locations, including businesses, schools, hospitals, and major public venues. Despite the almost inconceivable quantities of food being provided, quality and integrity are both of paramount importance.

Bigger Isn't Always Better

The company's vast network of operations covers dozens of countries, each operating in a comparatively autonomous manner. A few years ago a hosted VPN service was introduced to support worldwide interconnectivity: A long-serving network architect for the company elaborated, "The service did exactly what we needed it to do but it just cost far too much."

He continued, "We started looking at Microsoft Azure as a potential alternative, and it appeared to be a great fit for our requirements: right up to the point when I realized we couldn't connect all the countries!"

Microsoft Azure has limitations on the number of VPN tunnels allowed, "Even the top-end, high-performance Azure gateway package couldn't handle the number of countries and entities we needed to support," noted the architect.

Toll-free Tunnels

To supplement the security measures utilized by the original hosted VPN service provider, the company had deployed a series of Fortinet FortiGate enterprise firewall appliances. The network architect commented, "We were already impressed with the capabilities of the FortiGate solution and excited to realize that it was the perfect answer to our issue with Azure tunnel restrictions."

"There are vendors in the marketplace that make great routers and switches but whenever I need great enterprise protection, Fortinet is my first choice."

– Network Architect,
Food Services Company

Details

Customer: Top 5 Global Food Services Company

Industry: Food and Beverage Services

Location: Global

Solution

- Fortinet FortiGate Enterprise Firewall (multiple models)

Even the smallest FortiGate can support hundreds of tunnels—and several thousand on the larger models—allowing the food services provider to create a configuration permitting each country to utilize a dedicated tunnel into one of the Fortinet appliances. The combined traffic was then routed into a single connection with Azure. “The FortiGate gave us a very simple, yet elegant solution and had the benefit of enabling us to continue leveraging all the security features and functionality that we previously utilized in the hosted-service environment.”

Think Locally, Act Globally

The company’s business model encourages country-level autonomy to enable operations to be optimized for local conditions. This approach has been a contributing factor across decades of successful operations but it created potential challenges in other areas:

“Because every country is empowered to make its own decisions, this is exactly what they did! Each IT team had made different choices for the solutions it implemented. We seemed to have firewalls from every vendor imaginable, including some very obscure brands,” explained the architect.

“The great thing is that the FortiGate can talk to anything; even firewalls that most people have never even heard of! I’ve yet to come across a single box that I can’t get the FortiGate to connect with.”

As key components within the framework of the Fortinet Security Fabric, the FortiGates have the innate ability to integrate and share intelligence with diverse devices across the company’s widespread environment. The Security Fabric provides control, integration, and easy management throughout the organization and alleviates the gaps in protection frequently found in traditional heterogeneous infrastructures.

Flipping the Switch

Another challenge was the imperative that the transition to Azure have zero impact on business operations; a directive made significantly tougher by the complexity and scope of the multinational’s environment. However, good planning and partnering with Fortinet Professional Services consultants dispelled any concerns.

Under the Microscope

Azure is one of the world’s most pervasive cloud platforms and incorporates a wide set of tools to enable even technically averse users to monitor and manage their deployment. However, situations can arise where lower-level details are needed to fully optimize the service, but the visibility given by the Azure gateway can sometimes be too limited. “I really depend on the information provided by my FortiGates. They give me the granularity to drill down and debug anything I need to. It’s a very efficient way to manage the whole infrastructure,” commented the architect.

He added, “The FortiGate is exceptionally intuitive; it just makes sense. Even though the appliance is extremely powerful, the individual functions are so well-integrated with each other that I frequently just use the CLI [command line interface] to make any modifications I need, anywhere in the world.”

Business Impact

- Negated Azure technical restrictions to enable Azure-based connectivity across dozens of countries
- Transitioned rapidly to cloud-based operations with zero business impact
- Integrated highly diverse IT environments from around the world into a standardized cloud configuration
- Enhanced visibility and control across entire global deployment; accessible from a single location
- Secured large-scale, complex hybrid cloud and physical environment

“We took the existing hosted configuration, mirrored it on the FortiGates and after redirecting a few IP addresses, we just flipped the switch. The entire organization was moved to Azure on a single weekend morning: no issues, no downtime, no fuss!”

*– Network Architect,
Food Services Company*

Fortinet: Dedicated to Security

As a seasoned practitioner in the disciplines of networking, switching, WANs, LANs, and infrastructure, the network architect has the credentials to authoritatively comment on the marketplace: “I find the FortiGate appliances extremely easy to work with. I’ve seen so many other devices where even after lengthy examination of the configurations, it’s really hard to unravel what’s actually going on. Many give the impression that they’re made from two or three separate boxes—like an ISP router and firewall slapped together with a bit of UTM functionality thrown on top—all randomly bolted together.”

He continued, “If I need unified protection—physical or virtual—I want a solution manufactured and supported by people dedicated to security and who are leaders, not followers. There are vendors in the marketplace that make great routers and switches but whenever I need great enterprise protection, Fortinet is my first choice.”

For the food services giant, the Azure and Fortinet Security Fabric pairing has made the promise of moving to a cloud-based environment a reality. The network architect summarized, “Azure is definitely the right platform for us but the size and complexity of our operations nearly made it a non-starter. By adding the FortiGates, we’ve been able to provide each entity with a dedicated tunnel, enhance security, and dramatically improve visibility and control across the whole infrastructure.”



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