



CASE STUDY

Building an Agile, Secure Network While Eliminating MPLS Spend with FortiGate Secure SD-WAN



Founded in 2001, HR Path is a global leader in human resources technology, with integrated products and services that include a core HR system, a proprietary HR business intelligence solution, and strategic consulting. Headquartered in Paris, the company’s 900 employees support 1,250 customers in 18 countries, generating US\$120 million in annual revenue.

Navigating Multi-cloud Security Needs

As the company has grown, its cybersecurity needs have become more complex. “Historically, security at HR Path was primarily a computer function,” explains Sébastien Griet, HR Path’s infrastructure director. “In view of new legislation, new risks, and increasing demands from our customers, security is now considered part of the overall risk management strategy.” Specifically, Griet cites the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), emerging threats involving ransomware, and customers’ demand for compliance with the ISO standard as examples of these three categories of risk.

Around the same time, HR Path’s network was also becoming more complex. “We were expanding quickly, and like many companies we were adopting applications in multiple clouds,” Griet recalls. “As a result, just as security was becoming a more complex priority for us, network performance was becoming a potential issue as well.”

These converging factors resulted in the creation of HR Path’s first cybersecurity team in 2018. “The security strategy is decided jointly with the CISO, the CEO, and the CIO,” Griet notes. “We wanted to develop a process through which security would be an integral part of every IT project—rather than an add-on or afterthought.”

Capitalizing on an Opportunity for an Agile Network

HR Path had the chance to put these principles into action when the switching equipment in the company’s data center was coming up for renewal. “We were initially only looking at switching solutions,” Griet remembers. “But we decided to take the opportunity to review our entire infrastructure.”

At the time, HR Path’s far-flung locations were connected using a traditional wide-area network (WAN) with multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) circuits. MPLS bandwidth is especially expensive in some of the countries that host HR Path branch offices, creating a large budget line item for several small offices. In addition, increases in network traffic—including to and from cloud data centers—meant

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Details

Customer: HR Path

Industry: Technology

Location: Paris, France

Fortinet Partner

■ Aciernet

that the company would soon need to purchase additional MPLS bandwidth to ensure performance at many locations. “We realized that to control costs and have maximum agility, we needed to separate ourselves from reliance on our MPLS provider,” Griet says.

As a result, HR Path solicited proposals for software-defined WAN (SD-WAN) solutions, which would enable the company to scale its network capabilities using the public internet. “We ideally wanted to combine next-generation firewall (NGFW) protection with SD-WAN networking in the same device,” Griet explains. “This would alleviate the need for a separate security solution for the SD-WAN infrastructure.”

Inspecting Exponentially Increasing Encrypted Traffic

Griet’s team ultimately chose a proposal from Fortinet Partner Aciernet based on FortiGate Secure SD-WAN, a capability built into FortiGate NGFWs. “The Fortinet proposal was the only one we received that provides a global solution which enables full provision of internet, network, Wi-Fi, and telephony across all of our branches—using a single device,” Griet notes.

A rigorous proof of concept (POC) by the Aciernet team confirmed that the Fortinet solution met all of HR Path’s security and performance requirements. “We were pleased with the product’s performance when using secure sockets layer (SSL) and transport layer security (TLS) decryption,” Griet says. “We especially liked that intrusion protection (IPS), web filtering, and application control were built in.”

HR Path purchased FortiGate Secure SD-WAN NGFWs for its corporate data center and for each of its branch locations. In addition, the team acquired FortiSwitch switches to replace the legacy switches that were coming up for renewal, as well as FortiAuthenticator identity and access management to ensure that users are verified. As part of this process, Griet’s team purchased the FortiGate Unified Threat Management bundle, which adds security services like IPS, web filtering, application control, and advanced malware protection—along with 24x7 FortiCare support services.

Rounding out the solution HR Path implemented is FortiAnalyzer, which the company opted to deploy on a virtual machine. That solution provides analytics-powered security and log management that assists with security strategy and reporting.

Rolling out a Cost-saving Solution

Aciernet began deployment for HR Path earlier this year, and the project is moving forward smoothly. “Three months after starting the migration, we already have five branches in France with a full FortiGate Secure SD-WAN solution,” Griet reports. “Agencies and employees are delighted because everything works better, their daily work is easier, and they have seen gains in reactivity.” Griet expects the current deployment to 16 branch offices in France and across Europe to take less than two years, with the possibility of expanding to other geographies after that.

Even before deployment is complete, the company is already seeing tangible benefits. “We are retiring the MPLS connection with each branch office as it comes online with the Fortinet solution,” Griet explains. “Once we have retired all our MPLS circuits, we evaluate the savings to be at least €12,000 (US\$13,000) per site per year for that infrastructure. This does not include the additional bandwidth we would have had to purchase with the legacy solution. These savings contribute to our estimate that we will achieve 100% return on investment (ROI) for the solution within five years.”

Business Impact

- €12,000 (US\$13,000) per site annual infrastructure cost savings by replacing MPLS infrastructure with SD-WAN solution
- Projected 100% ROI in five years
- Enhanced security through improved visibility and control of all global ISPs
- Reduced risk of intrusion through identity and access management and integrated IPS
- Increased potential customer retention by meeting or exceeding their security standards

Solutions

- FortiGate Secure SD-WAN
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiAuthenticator

Realizing Significant Technical Benefits

In addition to these financial benefits, the SD-WAN infrastructure brings technical benefits for HR Path. “We are now able to centrally manage the internet service providers (ISPs) at each branch without relying on a single entity to provide that connectivity,” Griet explains. “It also assists us in achieving traceability of client connections into outsourced solutions.”

The Fortinet solution also enhances security for HR Path—especially at its branch offices. “FortiAuthenticator helps us log, control, correct, and allow or deny access to internal data and applications according to the rights of each user,” Griet notes. “And having IPS, application control, and web filtering integrated with the NGFW enhances security while simplifying administration.”

Finally, the Fortinet solution enables HR Path to meet customers’ security requirements—something that would be required for the company to stay in business over the long term. “A customer with a major automotive supplier recently reviewed our security infrastructure and was very pleased,” Griet relates.

As deployment moves forward, Griet is very pleased with the success his team is achieving with Aciernet and Fortinet. “We consider Fortinet to be one of the leading providers of cybersecurity,” Griet asserts. “I believe that our relationship will only grow.”

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