

CASE STUDY

Canadian Data Management Company Achieves High Availability and Security with FortiSASE and Fortinet Cloud Consulting Services

For over 25 years, ZEMA Global Data Corp. has helped companies in the utilities and commodities sectors maximize margins and increase productivity with unique, in-depth market insights that drive strategic decision-making. Its comprehensive end-to-end data solution, ZEMA, streamlines data management, analytics, automation, and integration with a tangible impact on business operations and revenue. “ZEMA automates the entire data pipeline for our clients. It streamlines processes, so there’s less data wrangling and more data-driven decision-making,” says Archile Lauro Mortel, system network administrator at ZEMA. “ZEMA has evolved to integrate with any tool that our clients use, whether it’s a database-to-database type of connection or cloud-based tool—from Azure to Power BI to SAP,” he adds.

A relentless pursuit of innovation has also earned ZEMA several industry awards, including Cloud Enterprise Data Warehouse Solution of The Year by Data Breakthrough, 2022 Stratus Award for Cloud Computing by the Business Intelligence Group, and Data Management Software of the Year award, 2022, at the 6th Annual Canadian Business Awards.

Mitigating Risks with High Availability

Given the nature of its solutions, ZEMA faces several cybersecurity risks. DDoS attacks posed the most significant threat due to the company’s web-facing infrastructure. ZEMA also needed protection from ransomware and phishing attempts, as employees have become a point of vulnerability and potential data breaches.

Over 90% of ZEMA’s staff work remotely, and the company needed a secure and reliable access to internal applications and its data centers worldwide. “We reached out to Fortinet Cloud Consulting Services to get a rundown of FortiSASE as a highly available entry point. We also wanted to enable secure dynamic routing to protect routing protocols and ensure the integrity and confidentiality of routing information.”

For many years, ZEMA has relied on the FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall (NGFW) as its primary firewall and first line of defense. Because of the positive experience with Fortinet’s solution, the decision to bring Fortinet Cloud Consulting Services seemed like a natural progression. “The Cloud Consulting Services team was very knowledgeable and involved in building every facet of the foundation of the new infrastructure,” Archile explains. “Some of the third-party vendors we’ve worked with said ‘yes’ to everything, and in the end, they left things hanging. On the contrary, the Fortinet team gave us confidence by telling us what was plausible and what was not. It helped us get things on track, creating a road map, a timeline, and a diagram to work on ideas.”



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Archile Lauro Mortel
System Network Administrator
ZEMA Global Data Corp.

Details

Customer: ZEMA Global Data Corp.

Industry: Technology

Location: Canada

Number of SASE Users: 250

Business Impact

- Higher security and reliability across all VPN connections
- 90% reduction in performance-related tickets
- Increased availability of data center infrastructure

At the time, ZEMA was using another SASE solution that was not highly available. It also involved an SSL VPN designed for a specific firewall, which meant that the firewall served as the sole entry point for accessing the network regardless of location. “We have multiple data centers,” Archile explains. “With the existing system, if the main data center went down, everything became unreachable, and our support team could not react unless that site went back up. We chose FortiSASE because it gave us that high availability and because it could easily adapt to fit our needs.”

Reliable, Multi-Phase Support

With the support of Fortinet Cloud Consulting Services, ZEMA deployed FortiSASE in four phases. Both teams defined objectives, expectations, and the project’s scope in the evaluation phase. In phase two, they developed working sessions to fulfill the routing’s foundation requirements. In phase three, the consulting team provisioned FortiSASE and easily connected it ZEMA’s on-premises SD-WAN network powered by FortiGate. This step laid the groundwork for phase four, the pilot.

“Throughout the project, Fortinet Cloud Consulting Services was instrumental in testing functionality for specific users, fine-tuning applications and permissions, and configuring the security features,” Archile says. “At 85% deployment, people using it were already saying it was a major win compared to the previous solution. With FortiSASE, our user experience has skyrocketed in terms of connectivity to our environment—what we have now feels light years away from before.”

The change in the user’s experience was mainly reflected in the number of complaints the back-end team received. With the previous solution, ZEMA received tickets about the VPN not being up to par, such as constant disconnections or an inability to connect. With FortiSASE, tickets relating to VPN issues virtually ceased. “Previously, we would get up to 30 monthly tickets; now that’s down to two or three. And those cases would often be isolated and unrelated to our network, like someone’s poor Wi-Fi or LAN connection.” ZEMA can also choose to leverage the digital experience monitoring capability of FortiSASE to monitor the end-to-end performance of the client and FortiSASE or from FortiSASE to Software-as-a-Service applications to troubleshoot these issues.

With FortiSASE, ZEMA now has unified threat protection and a way to monitor its environment effectively, giving it complete visibility. ZEMA also gained higher security across its VPN connections. “FortiSASE gives us peace of mind. And, thanks to the support of the Fortinet Cloud Consulting team, we now have modified split tunneling, which is a lot more secure. We can monitor most of the traffic in and out of our environment. There’s also a dashboard of what is mostly consumed—the bandwidth within the network and where everybody is going.”

Archile also says that the actual value of Fortinet Cloud Consulting is that ZEMA gets direct contact and has built a relationship with the Fortinet team. “We know that they’re always there. They can tell us if a solution has specific capabilities for a potential issue we’re experiencing. We are pressured to finish everything as soon as possible, and the Fortinet Consulting team’s support saves us time and resources.”

The next stage in the ZEMA and Fortinet roadmap is to add another layer of FortiGate NGFWs internally and run a web application firewall to round off a comprehensive web security strategy.

Business Impact (cont.)

- Complete control of traffic across the entire network environment
- Solid protection against DDoS, ransomware, and phishing attacks on critical endpoints

Solutions

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall
- Fortinet Secure SD-WAN
- FortiSASE

Services

- Fortinet Cloud Consulting Services

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