

CASE STUDY

Fortinet Helps Goodwill Better Serve the People of Middle Tennessee

In Tennessee's economy, as in the national and global business environments, change is inevitable and accelerating. Many residents of the state need to refresh their skill sets to stay competitive in the labor market. Helping these individuals prepare for new career paths is a key mission of the nonprofit Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee. The organization provides digital and financial literacy classes, including Google digital skills and "grow with Google" training; job training programs in construction, call center, solar installation, and custodial services; and career coaching and hiring events, all funded by its popular thrift stores.

"We turn gently used, donated household items into revenue that supports our mission," explains Ed O'Kelley, vice president of IT for Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee. "Our career solutions centers are focused on changing lives through employment, training, and education. For example, one program teaches the basics of construction work with an emphasis on safety. Someone might enter the construction training program earning minimum wage, but after getting our construction certificate, they might be able to earn \$20 an hour or more. Now, we are expanding that program to reach more people and cover other trades."

In support of this mission, Goodwill of Middle Tennessee has around 1,300 employees spread across 32 retail stores, 20 donation centers, and three standalone career solutions centers. The IT team of 12 includes just one cybersecurity specialist. Lean staffing is imperative in the nonprofit world, so Goodwill's security solutions must be as efficient as possible.

"Our key cybersecurity concern is protecting the personally identifiable information we process," O'Kelley says. "We need to be a trustworthy resource so that clients come to us with confidence that their information will be protected." The risk to Goodwill's brand reputation, should the organization experience a cyberattack, extends beyond the Tennessee state line. "Although we are located in middle Tennessee, if we were to suffer a security incident, that might reflect on Goodwill organizations throughout the country," O'Kelley adds. "It is crucial for us to take all appropriate security measures."

Finding the Path to More Efficient Security

A few years ago, O'Kelley faced challenges in protecting his organization's WAN. "Our legacy security environment had been in place since 2014," O'Kelley says. "We had firewalls and some tools, but they were not integrated. We never felt like that environment was enterprise-ready."

Managing the disparate solutions was inefficient, at best. "We would have to go to several different portals to get information from our security stack," he says. "That



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Goodwill Industries of
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Details

Customer: Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

Industry: Nonprofit
Social Enterprise

Headquarters: Nashville,
Tennessee

**Number of Secure SD-WAN
Locations:** 55

Business Impact

- Faster response to security events improves mitigation of any threats
- SD-Branch costs reduced by half
- Streamlined management of firewall policies makes IT staff more efficient

was cumbersome, and we did not always get timely information from some of the tools because we lacked a centralized repository of security information. It was also a very passive environment, which meant the team would have to put in a lot of time to manually shut down access anytime a threat emerged.”

Endpoint security presented its issues: “We had switched antivirus solutions four times within six years,” O’Kelley adds. “The products were cumbersome and difficult to work with, and they operated outside the rest of the security stack.”

As legacy WAN and security solutions approached end of life, O’Kelley and his team began looking for a new provider. “We did not feel like our vendor at the time had a great roadmap for what would replace our legacy devices,” he says.

Goodwill of Middle Tennessee considered a handful of options. Decision-makers wanted security solutions that would integrate, “where we would get one view across our environment and manage everything through a single platform,” O’Kelley says. Cost was also a factor. “A couple of the vendors on our list were extremely expensive,” he adds.

O’Kelley engaged Louisville, Kentucky-based system integrator Appsalute Inc. to help with the decision. Appsalute, a Fortinet partner, saw the tight integration of the Fortinet Security Fabric as the right solution to meet the needs of Goodwill of Middle Tennessee. “One of the big reasons we chose Fortinet is that their networking tools are built from the ground up with security in mind,” O’Kelley says. “Appsalute explained that we could achieve better performance, while drastically cutting costs, if we moved to Fortinet. So that is the path we took.”

Better Security, More Flexible Networking

Goodwill of Middle Tennessee deployed Fortinet solutions throughout its network. A FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall (NGFW) protects each location’s LAN edge, supported by the FortiGuard AI-Powered Security Services Unified Threat Protection (UTP) Bundle. FortiSwitch secure enterprise switches provide LAN connectivity, and Fortinet Secure SD-WAN connects the organization’s sites. FortiAP access points provide wireless access within the Goodwill stores and other locations, while FortiExtender provides integrated 5G/LTE wireless WAN connectivity, enriching their network edge. Converging secure networking technologies into a single platform at the branch essentially enables Fortinet SD-Branch.

O’Kelley’s team immediately began reaping benefits from this new infrastructure. “One advantage is the ability to plug a piece of equipment into the switch and not worry about which port it uses,” he says. Goodwill of Middle Tennessee must divide each location’s network into virtual LANs (VLANs) to prevent lateral movement should a threat make it in and comply with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) regulations for point-of-sale devices.

“Previously, we had a very rigid environment, where specific ports were assigned to each network segment,” O’Kelley says. “If someone plugged a device into the wrong port, it would not work. However, Fortinet can automatically place each device into the proper VLAN, regardless of which port it is plugged into. So now we have a lot more flexibility in designing a secure network that is segmented appropriately for PCI compliance.”

This has improved the IT team’s efficiency. “If a device is not working, we can now instruct our retail teams to troubleshoot the issue themselves by unplugging the cable and trying it in a different switch port,” O’Kelley says. “We do not have to travel to their location; that has saved us a lot of time. It has also made the process much more seamless when we need to make a change to the network.”

Business Impact (cont)

- Local teams can troubleshoot LAN issues, saving IT time
- “Amazing” network performance and seamless failover reduces volume of help desk tickets
- Ease of Wi-Fi connections for employees

Solutions

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall
- Fortinet Secure SD-WAN
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAP
- FortiExtender
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiManager
- FortiEDR
- FortiClient

Services

- FortiGuard AI-Powered Security Services Unified Threat Protection Bundle

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Network performance has improved noticeably as well. “Our network previously was quite slow,” O’Kelley reports. “With the Fortinet solutions, our network speed has been amazing. We used to receive frequent performance-related complaints from end-users, but we have heard zero complaints since we deployed the Fortinet networking solutions.”

O’Kelley adds that even in the event of a device or circuit failure, the FortiGate NGFWs failover so quickly that end-users do not notice. Some of the locations have two primary fiber circuits, while others use low-cost cable as their primary circuit, with a FortiExtender device connecting to broadband as a backup link. “The FortiExtenders are fantastic,” O’Kelley says. “The failover to broadband is completely seamless.”

“Phenomenal” Centralized Network and Security Management

Goodwill of Middle Tennessee uses the FortiManager and FortiAnalyzer platforms to manage the Fortinet solutions daily. “That is the number-one benefit for us from a compliance standpoint: The centralization of management has been absolutely phenomenal,” O’Kelley says. “Now we can make firewall changes much more easily. We develop policies in FortiManager, and once they are approved, we can push them out to all our devices in just minutes.”

Better yet, if a firewall needs a policy change or firmware update, the team can see that immediately via the native single-pane-of-glass perspective they deployed by integrating FortiManager and FortiAnalyzer with the rest of the Fortinet Security Fabric. “Policies sometimes get out of date because of something someone did locally,” O’Kelley explains. “I love the fact that, if that happens, FortiManager will tell us, ‘You need to get this firewall back in compliance with corporate policy.’ Then we can go in and fix whatever we need to fix.”

O’Kelley cites the FortiManager whitelisting capabilities as one specific area in which the platform has streamlined security management: “Across our 32 stores in middle Tennessee, we used to have 32 different whitelists. If I was working in a Nashville store and traveled to the Shelbyville store, I would have to open a help desk ticket to be whitelisted for the new location. The process was secure but also business-crippling.

“The Fortinet solution enables us to provide a wireless employee network and a separate guest network in each location and to enforce the same security policies organization-wide,” O’Kelley continues. “If an employee travels from Nashville to Shelbyville, they can just get on the employee Wi-Fi. That has been a huge win for us.”

Cutting SD-Branch Costs in Half Enables Further Investment in Security

About a year after completing the deployment of the Fortinet SD-Branch networking, Goodwill of Middle Tennessee rolled out the FortiEDR endpoint detection and response solution, FortiClient solution for VPN connectivity, and FortiMail email protection. Integrating these solutions with the Fortinet Security Fabric significantly expanded O’Kelley’s team’s visibility of threats to their network. That visibility, in turn, enables them to respond to threats more quickly.

“The ability to get FortiEDR alerts, then go into FortiAnalyzer and see what is actually happening—we did not have that type of visibility before,” O’Kelley says. “We can see and respond to events much more quickly, even situations like users trying to install applications that are blocked. By integrating the FortiEDR alerts into our third-party SIEM [security information and event management] solution, we have been able to identify multiple attempts to log into our firewalls. We blocked those IP addresses across all our firewalls using the Fortinet management tools.”

Rollout of the endpoint and email security solutions was made possible by the cost savings O’Kelley introduced through the Fortinet SD-Branch deployment. “Moving to Fortinet basically cut our annual costs in half for hardware and licensing across our switches, access points, and firewalls,” he says. “We have been able to roll those savings on FortiGate, FortiSwitch, and FortiAP devices into FortiEDR and FortiMail. We have grown our cybersecurity posture without increasing our overall pool of security dollars.”

At the same time, the consolidation of security information enabled Goodwill of Middle Tennessee to partner with an external security operations center (SOC). “Within our Fortinet environment, we no longer have information coming from a lot of different sources,” O’Kelley says. “That gave us the ability to aggregate our security events and made it feasible for us to partner with a SOC provider, which, in turn, boosts our confidence in the effectiveness of our security environment.”



O'Kelley says that as his team looks to the future, they are considering ways to further extend their multilayered approach to security. The FortiDeceptor agentless deception platform and FortiNAC network access control solutions are on the organization's radar. O'Kelley is working with Fortinet to determine whether Goodwill of Middle Tennessee might qualify for the Fortinet grant support program.

Overall, O'Kelley concludes, the Fortinet stack has enabled his organization to better meet the needs of the residents of Middle Tennessee. "By making the move to Fortinet SD-Branch, we have increased performance of the network and generated better security in support of the organization's mission. And because we see everything through a single console and spend less time switching between tools, we spend less time firefighting and more time focused on better serving our community."



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