



Opportunity Fund uses Google Cloud Platform and Barracuda CloudGen Firewall to Expand Microfinancing Services



Profile:

- Based in San Jose, CA
- Founded in 1994
- Provides microloans for small business owners and microsavings accounts to help students pay for college and families save for a rainy day

Challenge:

- Wanted to scale operations beyond California, but on-premises data center had aging servers and limited storage that could not support expansion.
- Looked to cut infrastructure costs and reduce downtime

Solution:

Barracuda CloudGen Firewall on Google Cloud Platform

Results:

- Opportunity Fund has saved between 30 to 40 percent in infrastructure costs.
- Barracuda CloudGen Firewall protects sensitive financial data
- Opportunity Fund has eliminated downtime since moving to GCP
- Opportunity Fund can easily scale to expand its services across the United States

Overview

Poverty remains one of the United States' most pressing issues. More than 43 million people live at or below the poverty line, according to the most recent statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau. To combat that, the non-profit, California-based Opportunity Fund provides microfinancing to help businesses and residents in economically distressed communities work toward financial stability. Opportunity Fund has provided \$230 million in loans to more than 6,800 entrepreneurs to help small businesses grow, and started microsavings accounts for more than 6,200 families who have saved more than \$20 million in deposits and earnings.

Opportunity Fund wanted to expand its services beyond California to the rest of the United States. But its on-premises data center with aging servers and limited storage could not scale to support the expansion. Rather than building a new data center, Opportunity Fund decided to move its infrastructure to the cloud. To help choose a provider, it performed a proof of concept and compared moving its infrastructure to the cloud using Google Cloud Platform (GCP) and multiple other cloud service providers. According to IT Solutions Lead Kishore Venkat, GCP outperformed its competitors by a wide margin, while also costing 20 percent to 30 percent less. This made GCP an easy choice.

Security is vital for Opportunity Fund because of its sensitive financial information, so it chose Barracuda CloudGen Firewall from Google Cloud Partner Barracuda Networks to provide added data protection for data traveling over the network. Barracuda CloudGen Firewall integrates with GCP and inspects all inbound and outbound traffic for malware and other potential security issues. Opportunity Fund found Barracuda CloudGen Firewall was the best solution for implementing its firewall and network rules.

A Fast, Highly Secure "Lift-and-Shift" to the Cloud

Using GCP, CloudEndure and Barracuda CloudGen Firewall, Opportunity Fund took two weeks to migrate its servers, storage and firewall to a test bed in the cloud, and an additional week for the final "lift-and-shift" operation to replicate its on-premise production infrastructure to the cloud. It ran several cycles of testing production workloads on GCP as a testbed before doing the final cutover to GCP.

Opportunity Fund runs its business using 20+ Google Compute Engine virtual machines. Compute Engine powers all of its applications, including MS SQL database servers, accounting software, CRM software, and loan management software. Between 40 and 50 terabytes of company data, including sensitive financial information, are encrypted and stored in Google Cloud Storage.

About Barracuda Security Solutions on Google Cloud Platform

Google Cloud Platform is a high-performing, cost-effective, and secure Infrastructure-as-a-Service where you can build and scale your business IT workloads. However, you still need an additional layer of protection for operating systems, packages, and applications deployed in the cloud. Barracuda CloudGen Firewall—the first network firewall offered on Google Cloud Platform—secures your dispersed network infrastructure in the cloud.

The Barracuda CloudGen Firewall helps secure the data, and helps ensure that Opportunity Fund's sensitive financial communications with its partners are kept private. All of Opportunity Fund's storage and applications are behind the firewall, so its remote offices can more securely access company data. Opportunity Fund set up multiple site-to-site VPNs, which allow its users to securely access data stored in GCP from company offices and home offices using Barracuda CloudGen Firewall.

"Barracuda CloudGen Firewall is extremely easy to configure, so we were up and running very quickly. It gives us peace of mind knowing that the CloudGen Firewall is helping to keep all of our sensitive data secure," says Kishore.

“Google Cloud Platform and Barracuda CloudGen Firewall are helping us accomplish our primary mission of helping people become financially stable to improve their lives.”

Kishore Venkat
IT Solutions Lead
Opportunity Fund

Reducing Costs, Improving Performance and Cutting Downtime

Opportunity Fund has cut its costs for infrastructure and related expenses with GCP. The company saved between 30 and 40 percent in infrastructure costs alone by moving to GCP rather than updating its on-premise data center, says Kishore. GCP analytics have helped Opportunity Fund further increase those savings. By following the advice offered by Compute Engine's VM Rightsizing Recommendation feature, Opportunity Fund saved an additional 10 percent in a single month, Kishore says.

There are also performance benefits that have come from using GCP. Engineers, who work on Opportunity Fund's applications, are more productive due to GCP's reliability and speed. Meanwhile, Opportunity Fund has experienced no downtime and has seen improved application performance since moving to GCP. Previously, it had outages and glitches because of issues with network providers and its data center's electricity supply. The dramatic improvement in application performance "is almost too good to believe," in Kishore's words.

About Opportunity Fund

Opportunity Fund is tackling economic inequality so that hard work and perseverance mean a shot at getting ahead, not just struggling to get by. Recognising that small amounts of money and financial advice can help people make permanent and lasting change in their own lives, its strategy combines microloans for small business owners and microsavings accounts to help students pay for college and families save for a rainy day. Since 1994, Opportunity Fund has deployed \$600 million and helped 20,000 families earn, save and invest in their own futures.

About Barracuda Networks, Inc.

Barracuda simplifies IT with cloud-enabled solutions that empower customers to protect their networks, applications, and data, regardless of where they reside. These powerful, easy-to-use, and affordable solutions are trusted by more than 150,000 organisations worldwide and are delivered in appliance, virtual appliance, cloud, and hybrid deployments. Barracuda's customer-centric business model focuses on delivering high-value, subscription-based IT solutions that provide end-to-end network and data security. For additional information, please visit barracuda.com.

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