

RHI networks global locations with Barracuda



Summary:

The Vienna-based company is an international technology leader for refractory materials with annual revenues of some 1.6 billion Euros and over 7,600 employees worldwide working under the umbrella brand RHI in their core business area of refractories.

Challenges:

- Needed a cost-effective way of operating
- Complex infrastructure which required reliable communications connections.

Solution:

- Barracuda CloudGen Firewall

Results:

- Realized enormous cost savings by managing global infrastructure centrally from Vienna
- Increased bandwidth

Barracuda CloudGen Firewall proves its worth on a daily basis

Back in 1998, the data network at RHI AG totaled 15 subsidiaries in Germany and Austria which were interconnected via Frame Relay and MAN (Metropolitan Area Network) technology. Today (2009), there are already over 90 network-relevant locations, spread across four continents. In view of this development, RHI sought a new solution approach a few years ago that would allow them to move away from Frame Relay and MAN and to guarantee the efficient management of the complex infrastructure and at the same time to ensure reliable communications connections.

“The Barracuda CloudGen Firewall solutions already included failover and Traffic Intelligence functions, which meant that we did not have to purchase any additional products. The management and rollout concept also address the particular requirements set by a globally distributed infrastructure.”

*Dipl. -Ing. Dr. Clemens Chizzall-Bonfadin
Manager of Global IT Security (CISO)
RHI AG*

Swaying the balance in Barracuda CloudGen Firewall's favor: Cost efficiency

“The decision to introduce a new infrastructure was mainly cost-driven,” recalls Gottfried Hofreither, Chief Information Officer (CIO) at RHI AG. “We wanted to start using Internet technologies here instead of expensive frame relay connections, but without having to make any concessions in terms of security. At the same time it was clear that we would not be able to operate cost-effectively with the hardware routers we had in place at that point.” Following an in-depth evaluation phase the company opted in favor of the Barracuda CloudGen Firewall.

About the Barracuda CloudGen Firewall

Barracuda CloudGen Firewalls feature advanced security capabilities, including integrated Intrusion Prevention (IPS), URL filtering and antivirus to identify and block evasion attempts that would trick traditional systems. Barracuda's security extends beyond a network to Barracuda's Advanced Threat Protection (ATP) cloud for both statistical and sandboxing analysis of zero-day and targeted threats that routinely bypass signature-based IPS and antivirus engines.



Barracuda
CloudGen Firewall

Cost savings after just two months

As the Barracuda CloudGen Firewall solutions were implemented in succession, it soon became obvious that the expectations regarding drastic cost optimization had not been set too high: By moving away from frame relay, the company realized enormous cost savings and refinancing rates of two months per location, while increasing the bandwidth at the same time. Costs are further optimized by managing the global infrastructure centrally from Vienna because RHI only needs three employees for the entire worldwide network. This is made possible by the Barracuda Firewall Control Center which administrators use to control the status of the remote gateways, to make settings, manage licenses and collate information about individual or multiple gateways. RHI is also the first company to implement the Firewall VPN engine for an extremely fast overview across the global VPN network.

Cost savings during the rollout

The Barracuda CloudGen Firewall appliances are installed locally as software appliances on standard hardware. By integrating an operating system developed by the company itself, this process can even be implemented by staff with no technical training. As Clemens Chizzali-Bonfadin explains: "In the past we had to run multiple installations by staff onsite if the gateway was inaccessible – which is a rare occurrence." Gottfried Hofreither adds: "The total access to all important configurations on the remote gateways has resulted in considerable efficiency increases and cost reductions. For example, we hardly have any travel expenses now – a major factor with a global infrastructure like ours."

Redundant failover – there is always an alternative route

From the outset it was clear for Gottfried Hofreither's team that connecting the international production facilities and sales subsidiaries in China would place particular demands on the connectivity solution. Countries like China and India have advanced technologically in recent years, but the infrastructure even in 2009 still does not correspond with the standard in western industrial countries. "Prioritizing the data traffic and redundant line failover were the basic requirements to ensure that processes could run smoothly in the global RHI network," recalls Gottfried Hofreither. "In our estimation Barracuda CloudGen Firewalls provide unrivalled functionality here that cannot be achieved by other products." RHI has defined respective hubs for the individual regions which are all connected to each other and as such result in a fully meshed network.

If one is responsible for a highly critical infrastructure then the technology supplier's customer orientation and marketing proximity are of major significance. The Barracuda route is the right one to take.

*Gottfried Hofreither
Chief Information Officer (CIO)
RHI AG*

The locations connect up to these hubs and the physical lines used are Internet and MPLS based. Direct connections between the locations are also possible at any time if these are required more frequently. The Barracuda next-generation solutions detect faults automatically if there is a line fault and conduct a transparent failover to alternative connections (generally possible; MPLS, Frame Relay, DSL, ISDN, leased lines, satellite-uplink or even dial-up). So if one location has no network access the connection can still be upheld.

Barracuda CloudGen Firewall

Fast Facts

- Integrated next-generation security
- Full SD-WAN capabilities included
- Full user/group awareness
- Full application visibility and granular access control
- Advanced Threat Protection (incl. sandboxing)
- Built-in web security and IDS/IPS
- Connection-friendly and robust VPN
- QoS and link balancing
- Industry-leading central management

Traffic intelligence protects SAP traffic

However, all measures to protect the connectivity at the link level are only effective to a certain extent if they are not completed using Traffic Intelligence systems. If these components are not in place, then scenarios can easily arise in which critical applications are inaccessible as long as bulk and mail traffic block the lines. For example, by using the integrated Traffic Intelligence function in the Barracuda CloudGen Firewalls RHI can guarantee that SAP traffic is given priority on the best lines (MPLS) and the bulk and mail traffic remains limited to Internet VPN. "As a result of our experience with networking international locations we are very pleased about the Traffic Intelligence, multi-provider and multi-link functions in the Barracuda CloudGen Firewalls," comments Clemens Chizzali-Bonfadin. "We achieve the highest levels of availability and service quality without having to purchase numerous service level agreements for other products."

RHI stays productive even in a crisis

"We don't need to speculate about our infrastructure's capability of keeping communications open in a crisis situation – it has already proven that this is the case," comments Clemens Chizzali-Bonfadin. When a seaquake off Taiwan's coastline destroyed various important underwater cables in late 2006, numerous large corporations' Asian locations disappeared into a "back hole" for days. However, the RHI subsidiaries in the region could still be reached and above all, remained productive. "Thanks to the centralized management and the redundant communications connections we were able to defuse the situation within just a few hours from our offices in Vienna so that the business processes were not negatively impacted," explains Clemens Chizzali-Bonfadin.

RHI and Barracuda Networks – partners for the future

Gottfried Hofreither and Clemens Chizzali-Bonfadin have already surprised ISPs and outsourcing service providers on several occasions with their detailed improvement suggestions for their technical infrastructures. A knowledge base has been built up during the close cooperation between RHI AG and Barracuda which today allows the company to track down and deploy optimization potentials. "We were not just convinced by the solutions' pure technical benefits, but also by the flexibility and commitment shown by Barracuda Networks," confirms Gottfried Hofreither.

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 organizations 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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