Data backup, security and intelligent traffic management: The Sogegross Group chooses Barracuda Networks

Profile:
The Sogegross Group
Leader in Italian large-scale retail sector

Summary:
The Sogegross Group is one of the ten biggest large-scale retail groups in Italy.

Challenges:
- Simplification of remote access to the company network and applications
- The need to better manage different connection types and lines in the points of sale
- The need to improve and modernise data backup and security
- The need for constant support and continuous product innovation

Solutions:
- Barracuda SSL VPN
- Barracuda CloudGen Firewall
- Barracuda Load Balancer ADC
- Barracuda Web Application Firewall
- Barracuda Backup
- Barracuda Email Security Gateway
- Barracuda Web Security Gateway

Results:
- Easy, secure and granular remote access to the company network and applications
- Security and protection for company data
- Intelligent management of company sites and traffic
- Fast, simple backup
- Cost savings and constant support
- Possibility to test solutions and speed of implementation

The Sogegross Group, a leader in the Italian large-scale retail sector, has adopted Barracuda solutions. The retailer opted for an IT infrastructure which offers reliability and high performance with remote access. This optimises its costs and guarantees data security.

The Customer

The Sogegross distribution group was founded in Genoa in 1920 as a small sales operation, entering large-scale retail in the 1940s and over time becoming one of the ten largest Italian companies in the sector. Today, the company has over 2,300 employees and a turnover of around 750 million Euros (2013 data). While its headquarters are still located in Genoa, Sogegross now operates throughout the main regions of central and northern Italy, with over 260 points of sale ranging from 200 to 7,000 m² of floor space. The company boasts a wide-ranging presence in all types of distribution channels including: cash & carry (Sogegross brand), supermarkets and superstores (Basko), discount stores (Ekom), franchised supermarkets and mini-marts (Doro), and e-commerce (www.laspesabasko.it).

IT infrastructure and challenges

The Sogegross management headquarters is a 25,000 m² facility in the Bolzaneto quarter of Genoa, equipped with the latest technology. The heart of the Group's IT system is also based in Genoa, where 150 company-owned points of sale and 250 affiliates are managed. The Information Technology Department is composed of eleven staff who handle technical and systems support enquires, security of the IT infrastructure and management aspects. The applications side, however, is entirely outsourced. The company's IT architecture is composed of 200 servers, 150 of which are virtual and 50 physical.

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>
> *Marco Staiti*
> *Head of ICT - The Sogegross Group*

Thanks to the use of cutting-edge IT technology, the Group's platform allows information on the entire distribution cycle to be monitored in real-time. It also allows deliveries to be organised precisely, and the minimum times necessary for supplying each point of sale to be established. However, Sogegross still needed to improve remote access to the company network to obtain even higher levels of performance inside the points of sale and therefore optimising costs and ensuring greater security and protection for company data at the same time.

The Sogegross Group began working with Barracuda Networks in 2009 to improve remote access to company applications and files for its staff.

"We needed a secure and effective remote email and VPN access to replace a piecemeal system which required continuous maintenance and management, wasting both employee time and company money," explained Marco Staiti, Head of ICT at Sogegross.

"We tested and then introduced Barracuda SSL VPN, which only required us to create users in the Active Directory and configure a policy."

Allowing access from any location and on any device without needing the installation and technical support typically required by a VPN client, the solution was quickly adopted by 300 Sogegross consultants. The solution was integrated with Strong Authentication mechanisms to obtain granular access control. Factors which convinced Sogegross to choose the Barracuda solution included the ease of use and roll-out speed, combined with the possibility to take advantage of a free trial of the product. Staiti was also impressed with its excellent value for money in terms of its performance.

After this initial experience, the Group opted to implement the solution from Barracuda Networks, from whom it has adopted almost all solutions over the last five years. The first of these was Barracuda CloudGen Firewall, which as well as introducing next-generation functions, allowed Sogegross to centrally and automatically manage different connection types and lines in the points of sale thanks to a single firewall.

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

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For its network load balancing, the retail giant chose Barracuda Load Balancer ADC, which allowed the company to have a single IP address which managed multiple sites on the basis of the URL. In this case, the effectiveness of the solution, the speed of installation and the simplicity of the implementation played a crucial role.

"We had just remodelled various company sites, and we immediately realised the need to send the traffic to different servers on the basis of availability: with Barracuda we were able to test out and install the appliance in just three days," Staiti explains.

These solutions were quickly joined by the Web Application Firewall, which answered the Group's requirement to protect company data from targeted attacks. It also implemented Barracuda Backup, which won Sogegross over for its capacity and cloud replication abilities, essential in the event of operational difficulties and emergencies.

"A key, yet uncommon aspect of Barracuda Networks is that they continue to innovate and develop their appliances. I'm not talking about your typical software updates and scheduled maintenance, but rather entirely new technologies which are offered roughly on an eight-month cycle," Staiti concludes. "We also chose to take advantage of Barracuda Energize Updates and Barracuda Instant Replacement, which as well as protecting the Barracuda solutions from the latest Internet threats thanks to constant updates, also assures us full support in the event of faults and hardware updates every four years."

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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