Premier partner delivers centralized, easy-to-manage security infrastructure.

Preferred Data Systems and Barracuda provide comprehensive, integrated security to support Exotic Automation’s cloud migration.
Profile

• Regional leader providing industrial solutions for automation, motion control, material handling, gasket and sealing
• Founded in 1963, headquarters in New Hudson, Michigan
• Approximately 250 employees distributed across 19 sites

Challenges

• Cloud migration created new security requirements
• Existing network architecture couldn’t scale as the company grew
• Unreliable VPN connectivity
• New e-commerce app needed security

Solutions

Barracuda CloudGen Firewall™
Barracuda Email Protection™
Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup™
Barracuda WAF-as-a-Service™

Technology Partner: Preferred Data Systems

• Barracuda Premier-level Partner
• Ten-year relationship with Exotic Automation
• Provides managed cybersecurity services using Barracuda technologies

Benefits

• Security and data protection for Microsoft 365 deployment
• More reliable, scalable, and secure distributed network
• Protection from application-layer threats as new app deploys
• Simple, powerful compliance support
As a Premier-level Barracuda partner, Preferred Data Systems (PDS) has the tools and skills to deliver solutions to meet all its clients' needs. For Senior Information Technology Advisor Daniel Johnston, that meant that he was confident he could resolve a set of connected challenges that one of his best customers was facing.

Exotic Automation and Supply, a regional leader in designing and building a wide variety of industrial systems, was growing quickly, through both expansion and acquisition, until they had 18 sites throughout Michigan and Indiana, and nearly 200 employees. And one recently completed project entered the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest hydraulic system ever built in the world.

“Exotic was coming up against the limits of the IT infrastructure that had served them well as a smaller company,” says Johnston. “We worked with Barracuda to create an integrated, comprehensive solution that ensured scalable, secure network operations. That solution is built on, and connected with, Barracuda solutions already in place for email and data protection in Microsoft 365, along with cloud-based application security.”

Updating network architecture and security

“At the time, we were using two firewalls,” says James Bland, IT Manager at Exotic. “We had a SonicWall firewall at headquarters, and all traffic to and from other locations was backhauled through that. And as we added mobile service centers, we needed another firewall that could manage dynamic IPs, so we put all of them on Meraki firewalls from Cisco.”

It got complex. “A lot of traffic had to come in through the Meraki at headquarters and out through the SonicWall,” continues Bland. “And that became too much to manage as we grew it out. It wasn’t scalable at that rate. A series of acquisitions meant we were sometimes absorbing forty endpoints and a data center, and migrating all that across was very tough with that mixed environment.”

“A planned move to a new headquarters was an opportunity to redesign their network, so Bland and his team went to Johnston at PDS. “I really value our relationship with PDS and with Daniel,” says Bland. “I like to say that we don’t have to be the experts on everything, as long as we have trusted experts we can go to. That’s how I think of both PDS and Barracuda.”

“Over our decade-long relationship with Exotic, we’ve helped them deploy and use Barracuda on-prem email security and message archiving,” says Johnston. “So even though we had to give serious consideration to both SonicWall and Cisco platforms, ultimately Barracuda CloudGen Firewall made the biggest impression on James and his team.”

Barracuda CloudGen Firewall was the foundation of the new network architecture, as Bland and his team eliminated internet-traffic backhauling, with local breakouts at all locations and mobile units. “Deploying them was, and is, simple,” says Bland. “We just send the unit to the location, and all they have to do is plug it in and connect it. Barracuda Firewall Control Center pushes the config file to the firewall, and that’s it.”

Another benefit was optimizing bandwidth provisioning. “The CloudGen Firewall shows us exactly how traffic is moving through the network and utilizing bandwidth,” says Bland. “That lets us optimize ISP costs. We can make sure no locations are over-provisioned with bandwidth.”

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James Bland, IT Manager
Exotic Automation
Cloud migration — email and data protection

"James and his team were always very satisfied with their on-prem Barracuda solutions," says Johnston. "So when they migrated to Microsoft 365, it was natural for us to show them how Barracuda cloud-delivered services could protect their email."

“Our on-prem Exchange server was always a single point of potential failure for us," adds Bland. "When we got the chance to go to the cloud, I was eager to do that. And using Barracuda Email Protection to secure Microsoft 365 seemed like an obvious choice, considering how well our Barracuda gateway appliance had served us.”

“And the fact that it includes Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup was a terrific bonus," he continues. "It meant we didn’t have to do a whole separate process to find a backup solution for our data in SharePoint and OneDrive and Teams. Having all our email security and data protection managed through a single pane of glass is fantastic, it saves us a lot of time.”

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James Bland, IT Manager
Exotic Automation
Compliance and demonstrating ROI

Bland sees benefits in terms of simplifying compliance as well. “Advanced email security capabilities like Impersonation Protection, combined with automated Incident Response, make it really easy to detect and respond to malicious emails,” he says. “And when it comes to industry and regulatory compliance, Barracuda Email Protection goes way beyond just checking off boxes. The interface and the reporting provide really detailed information that demonstrates exactly how we’ve dealt with various kinds of threats, whether that’s a regulatory demand or just a way to show upper management the value of our investment.”

App security

Exotic is in the process of deploying an e-commerce app that will help them manage the growth of their business. “Currently, almost all our ordering is done by phone,” says Bland, “but we expect this app to help make that process a lot more efficient. And we’ll build out more ways to interact via app with customers and partners and vendors.”

“When James turned to us for application security, the choice was obvious,” says Johnston. “We showed them how Barracuda Application Protection, using Barracuda WAF-as-a-Service, would meet all their app security needs while also being very simple to use — and that’s a benefit for PDS as well, since we are providing management of the service.”

Learn more:

Barracuda CloudGen Firewall provides a comprehensive set of next-generation firewall technologies to ensure real-time network protection against a broad range of network threats, vulnerabilities, and exploits, including SQL injections, cross-site scripting, denial of service attacks, trojans, viruses, worms, spyware, and many more. Secure SD-WAN functionality integrated in Barracuda CloudGen Firewall lets you ensure that there is always enough bandwidth for business-critical applications.

Barracuda Email Protection is for organizations that want to protect their businesses, brands, and people against the most advanced email-borne threats. It’s a comprehensive, easy-to-use solution that delivers gateway defense, API-based impersonation and phishing protection, incident response, data protection, and compliance support.
Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup™

Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup provides easy-to-use SaaS backup for your Microsoft 365 data, including Teams, Exchange Online, SharePoint and OneDrive, including OneNote, with unlimited storage and retention.

Barracuda Application Protection™

Barracuda Application Protection is a full-featured, cloud-delivered application security service — that includes web application, API, botnet protection and comprehensive protection against DDoS attacks that also ensures continuous application availability. It can be deployed, configured, and commissioned in minutes. It provides out-of-the-box protection with the default security policies, and the intuitive interface makes it easy to set up custom policies.

A comprehensive security infrastructure

Bland and his team are committed to building and maintaining a security infrastructure that integrates a complete set of advanced capabilities. “All the different pieces work together,” he says. “We’re also using CloudGen Access to upgrade to a Zero Trust access control system, and Security Awareness Training to make users smarter — as well as to identify the ones most in need of training.”

Cloud-delivered SOC-as-a-service

“It may sound like a lot for a small team to handle,” he continues. “But like I said, with PDS behind us, along with Barracuda’s technology and service, it’s like having an outsourced SOC. We don’t have to be the experts. In fact, with help from PDS, we’re currently evaluating Barracuda Managed XDR, a SOC-as-a-service platform that could bring us even more peace of mind by actively monitoring and adjusting our whole cybersecurity setup.”

“PDS has been a trusted partner to Exotic for a decade, and Barracuda earned our trust years ago too,” Bland concludes. “With them behind us, I just know that we’re getting the best, most complete cybersecurity money can buy, and my team and I all sleep better at night knowing that.”
About Barracuda

At Barracuda we strive to make the world a safer place.
We believe every business deserves access to cloud-first,
enterprise-grade security solutions that are easy to buy, deploy,
and use. We protect email, networks, data, and applications with
innovative solutions that grow and adapt with our customers’
journey. More than 200,000 organizations worldwide trust
Barracuda to protect them — in ways they may not even know
they are at risk — so they can focus on taking their business to
the next level. For more information, visit barracuda.com.