Tech-forward events leader overcomes Covid challenges.

Barracuda delivers critical security and connectivity for network events during and after lockdown.
Profile

- Largest Canadian-owned audiovisual/events management company
- Headquarters in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
- Founded 1984
- Operates across Canada and in the United States

Challenges

- Shift to remote events during lockdown drove need for technical upgrades
- Post-lockdown live events require more advanced technology and security
- Needed to improve connectivity and redundancy to ensure no service interruptions

Solutions

Results

- Security and reliability for high-profile corporate events
- Vastly increased visibility into network traffic
- Plug-and-play capabilities simplify and accelerate event setup
Kevin Ruck and John Christie — Stagevision’s Technical Director and Wireless & Communications Specialist respectively — are not typical Barracuda customers. “Neither of us has any formal training or background in network design or administration,” says Ruck. “We’ve pretty much taught ourselves what we needed when we needed it.”

For Stagevision — an audiovisual company providing high-end corporate event services — the need became urgent when Canada went into lockdown in 2020. “Switching to virtual events overnight meant we built our network infrastructure using whatever tech we could get,” continues Ruck. “We started with a gaming server and some switches from Best Buy. But clients grew concerned about security. Barracuda CloudGen Firewall gave us the high-grade security we needed, while also greatly improving connectivity and reliability.”

“The culture of the events industry has always been kinda rock-n-roll,” adds Christie. “We do what needs to be done, figuring out problems on the fly, and just make things work. But in this case we realized it was important to make a real investment in upgrading our capabilities. We got some enterprise-grade servers and high-end switches to improve our overall quality of service. And then we just had to address the security question.”

Choosing Barracuda CloudGen Firewall

“With the assistance of RDEL Technologies we evaluated several brands of enterprise-grade Next Generation Firewall and selected Barracuda CloudGen Firewall,” says Ruck. “The decision to go with Barracuda came down to value. We just felt that, for the money, the broader capabilities of the Barracuda product made it the best choice. We got two F400 units, and RDEL helped us configure them as a high-availability cluster.”

Network visibility — and country flags

“The biggest security concern that our clients have is around industrial espionage,” says Christie. “These corporations are sharing a lot of confidential information during some of their events. So one thing we really like about the Barracuda firewall is the visibility it gives us. We can see every single connection and all the traffic on the network really intuitively.”

“And when it comes to justifying our investment, the little country flags were a huge help,” adds Ruck. “John and I were busy configuring the firewalls on Christmas day, and the owner came in and asked why we were working on the holiday, wondering why it was that urgent. I showed him the event log page, listing hundreds of pings from all over the world, each one marked with the flag of the country of origin, mostly places we have no business with. He was amazed to learn that they were all hackers probing for security weaknesses — and there were never any more questions about the importance of getting security right ASAP.”

Back to “normal”

As Covid restrictions ended, Stagevision returned to putting on live, in-person corporate events. But it was definitely not a return to pre-lockdown ways of doing things.

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Kevin Ruck, Technical Director
Stagevision
“The digital transformation necessitated by the lockdown absolutely carried over into the post-Covid event industry,” says Ruck. “Before, we might have a client hand us a thumb drive or a DropBox link, asking us to display some slides or video. But now the whole event is IP-based, huge amounts of content being streamed constantly. We’d gotten good at doing that from our studios, but taking all that on the road — while maintaining the same level of security — was a new challenge.”

“By now we know and like our Barracuda CloudGen Firewall, so we went back and asked about smaller, more portable units,” adds Christie. “We ended up buying six F80 models of CloudGen Firewall, one F180, and Barracuda Firewall Control Center so that we can manage them remotely wherever we are.”

Streamlined set-up

Barracuda’s Zero-Touch Deployment feature is especially helpful for off-site events. “The process is that we ship the equipment, including the firewalls, to the event site,” says Ruck. “While they’re in transit, we put together the specific configuration files that they’ll need for the specific event. When they arrive, the local staff only have to plug them in and they fetch the files and configure themselves. These folks are basically roadies, they may be geniuses with traditional A/V, but they’re not network engineers. So that capability really streamlines the whole process.”

“Our situation doesn’t match typical use-cases, so explaining our issues to Barracuda support teams can be challenging. But once they understand what we’re trying to do, they devote themselves to figuring out a solution, no matter how long they have to stay on the phone with us.”

John Christie, Wireless and Communications Specialist
Stagevision
Reliable support, helpful resources

“Like I said, we’re not trained network engineers,” says Ruck. “So we have leaned heavily on the training resources in Barracuda Campus. It can take a little digging, but we’ve been able to figure out a lot about configuring and using Barracuda CloudGen Firewall just with the training materials we find there. There’s a lot!”

“And when we need a little hand-holding, Barracuda technical support is always there for us,” adds Christie. “Our situation doesn’t match typical use-cases, so explaining our issues to the support techs can be challenging. But once they understand what we’re trying to do, they devote themselves to figuring out a solution, no matter how long they have to stay on the phone with us. After deploying Barracuda Firewall Control Center, we had a three-hour phone call with support, and there was never a hint that they wanted to just close the ticket or transfer to someone else. They were committed to staying with us until everything was resolved.”

“The bottom line is that Barracuda played a key part in helping us get through two big transitions, first from in-person to virtual events, and later back to a digitally transformed version of in-person,” says Ruck. “We’ve never had cause to regret choosing Barracuda CloudGen Firewall, and I expect Barracuda to be our key network-security partner for the foreseeable future.”

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.

Barracuda Firewall Control Center offers a central management platform with various automation tools such as repository, templates, and APIs, that enable administrators to monitor the network status, manage firewall rulesets and security policies, and deploy software patches and version upgrades.
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.