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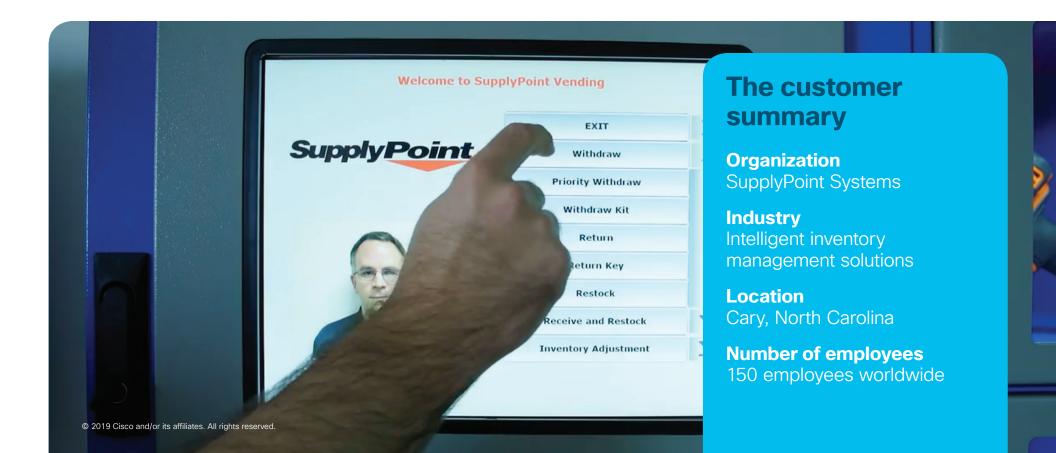
SupplyPoint Protects Their Data Center with Cisco NGFWs and Stealthwatch Cloud

Security for a growing company

The customer summary

Organization
SupplyPoint Systems

Industry
Intelligent inventory management solutions

Location
Cary, North Carolina

Number of employees
150 employees worldwide

SupplyPoint Systems was founded on a commitment to be the most trusted leader in intelligent vending and tool management. Their automated point-of-use inventory management systems help manufacturers reduce waste and become more efficient. With nine global locations and manufacturing operations in Europe and the United States, SupplyPoint's 150 employees serve customers in 30 countries, with over 38,000 machines installed across a wide variety of industries.

When the company started in 1998, they had even fewer staff—and no IT department. Everyone pitched in on security. SupplyPoint's products were standalone and all on-premise, so they could count on customers to secure their own networks.

But as technology progressed, SupplyPoint web-enabled their machines and expanded their solution. Now the company has a major web presence with a large application that handles 50 million inventory management requests per day. Since some of that traffic may contain threats, it's imperative that they take a more active security role to protect their equipment and customers that rely on their web services.

With the company's growth and extended solution, SupplyPoint added a small IT department. However, they still operate without a dedicated security team. Jeremy Rammalaere, Global SAAS Platform Manager in the research and development department, leads a team of two. These three are charged with supporting SupplyPoint's application and ensuring an excellent experience for customers, which includes management and everyday oversight of the infrastructure.

Coping with rising demands

So Rammalaere has to be strategic. To meet the high expectations of SupplyPoint's large enterprise customers, he's got to make the most of all his resources, both human and technical.

Current and new customers are adding to SupplyPoint's data center at roughly five percent weekly. At this rate of constant growth, his two staff members are at their limit with upgrades, replacements, and daily maintenance in addition to ongoing projects.

And yet they remain focused on fulfilling SupplyPoint's mission of trust. Rammalaere explains, "Security is in the forefront. We keep our customers' inventory and data safe and protected. It's our responsibility to make sure that none of their data is leaked to the public or their competitors, and that we maintain the highest level of data integrity that we can."

This can be challenging for just three individuals. He continues, "The amount of inbound threats we receive is my number one concern, tied with site reliability and making sure customers maintain the level of experience they hope to have on our site. Because security is, unfortunately, very lopsided. The good guys have to be good 100 percent of the time; the bad guys can get lucky once. As a result, the burden is on us to do everything we can to minimize risk."

SupplyPoint understands that security makes a real difference to real people too. According to Rammalaere, "We affect not only customers that depend on our equipment for inventory management, but the employees who work on the lines. If our customers have a data problem or if somehow we become responsible for a breach that causes a financial problem, that could affect all of those workers. (Security) can have a trickle down and ripple effect."

Jeremy Rammalaere
Global SAAS Platform Manager
SupplyPoint Systems

Objective

SupplyPoint needed to ensure that they could keep their customers' inventory and data safe and protected across the globe. They wanted a solution that would provide excellent visibility from a trusted partner that could give their small staff strong support.

Solution

Cisco ASA 5508-X Next-Generation Firewalls with FirePOWER™ Services

Cisco Stealthwatch® Cloud

Impact

Cisco NGFWs are protecting SupplyPoint's network and data reliably at efficient performance levels. With advanced malware protection, staff knows that threats are being detected and stopped automatically. They're able to better analyze data and meet customers' high expectations, even with average weekly growth of five percent.

Cisco Stealthwatch Cloud is providing extra visibility into data flowing into and out of their network and sending the team automatic notifications on threats. These alerts save time and help SupplyPoint manage their network more proactively.

SupplyPoint has taken advantage of Cisco support, including training, education, and crowdsourcing resources. This combination helped them during the deployment and configuration of their solution and has continued as they keep their technicians up to date and onboarded.

An integration with better security, visibility, and ease of use

With their transition to a web platform, SupplyPoint started with another firewall vendor. Before long, they experienced performance problems that required daily attention to revise policies or manually mitigate attacks. These drains on time were a burden and threatened to overstretch SupplyPoint's three-person team.

What's more, they soon found that this vendor could not meet their needs for support. When SupplyPoint posed questions in its support community, they received responses, such as, "If you were running a Cisco ASA, here's how you would do it." SupplyPoint often found themselves extrapolating to get their desired answers, so they decided to switch to Cisco for edge security and integrated analytics.

SupplyPoint deployed Cisco ASA 5508-X Next-Generation Firewalls. Rammalaere says the Cisco solution was flawless out of the box, easy to pick up and use within the first few days—a big plus for his team.

The transition to Cisco NGFWs also gave SupplyPoint an approach to security that's more hardened by default, focused on the most-critical incidents. The NGFW's automated, multilayered threat detection gives Rammalaere confidence that their traffic is continuously monitored and they're receiving priority alerts. Attacks are being stopped and they have the data and tools they need to work efficiently.

Additionally, along with better security, the integration of Cisco NGFWs with Cisco Stealthwatch Cloud has dramatically improved SupplyPoint's visibility into their traffic and data. Now they have contextual information and insights to make better decisions to solve problems. The Cisco solution also provides extra value by allowing them to do customizations as well as other integrations.

Behind the scenes, Cisco Talos provides a unique layer of security. Rammalaere says, "I'm sure I've taken advantage of protections that other people have seen before us that never even hit us. Other companies are using Cisco products and reporting attacks to Talos. Because it's already updated on our system, we get that advantage and protection and don't have to worry about it."

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Higher productivity, performance, and peace of mind

SupplyPoint expects their business expansion to continue, and along with it, their data center load. At the same time, customer demands for data security and application performance are likely to intensify.

Rammalaere and his team are handling it in stride. They're making the most of the advanced capabilities of their Cisco NGFWs to protect against breaches, keep their data center secure, and automate to make the most of their precious time. Cisco Stealthwatch Cloud is providing better visibility and insights for decision-making. They're utilizing Cisco's resources for training, education, and support to keep everyone up-to-date and get quick, accurate assistance when needed. Overall, their Cisco solution provides freedom from constantly watching over security and network-related issues as in the past, so they can be more proactive and stay more productive across their heavy workload.

Cisco is helping bring a higher level of assurance that SupplyPoint is meeting their primary business mission: to provide reliable, trusted services to their worldwide customers and keep their data safe.

In the future, the company plans to add more networking capacity to its data center with Cisco Nexus® and Catalyst® switches to replace older, legacy units, and is evaluating further investment in Cisco UCS® servers. They'll be able to take advantage of Cisco security products that integrate seamlessly across their architecture. Rammalaere shares a comfort level with Cisco that comes from a trust in the company, the products, and the value you get, "Steady. Consistent. Reliable."

Product list

2 - ASA 5508-X with Firepower Services

Cisco Stealthwatch Cloud