

Accelerating Growth and Innovation with a Unified Cisco SASE-Ready Network



H.B. Fuller

Industry:
Industrial adhesives

Location:
St. Paul, Minnesota

Organization:
7,100 employees, 100+ locations globally

Solution:
Cisco SASE
Cisco User Protection Suite
Cisco Breach Protection Suite

H.B. Fuller is the world's largest and oldest pureplay adhesive manufacturer, serving industries from automotive and electronics to healthcare and construction for over 140 years. The company operates 100+ sites across six continents and employs 7,100 people worldwide.

Business growth outpaces traditional tools

H.B. Fuller's ascent to global leadership – fueled by acquisitions and expansion – has made it a target for threat actors. With locations spanning regions from Egypt and India to Brazil and China, its attack surface is vast and dynamic. Over time, each acquisition has introduced new IT environments and legacy systems, creating vulnerabilities that traditional tools couldn't address.

Scaling security for a global hybrid workforce

Legacy authentication methods fell short of modern zero trust principles, and a patchwork of tools failed to deliver consistent visibility across the distributed environment. As the company adopted more SaaS and cloud applications to support its hybrid workforce, new challenges emerged:

- **Overly permissive access:** Traditional VPNs provided only broad, all-or-nothing access for remote employees and third-party resources.
- **Outdated access models:** Legacy VPNs and authentication methods couldn't deliver the agility or scalability needed to support a steady stream of acquisitions.
- **Integration overhead:** Managing numerous security tools created integration and administrative complexity – draining resources, slowing responses, and increasing the risk of misconfigurations and blind spots.

"We've been a happy Umbrella customer for many years, and moving to Secure Access has been a huge win for us. The migration process was smooth, and we didn't encounter any issues along the way."

Derek Shaw, Global Vice President, CIO at H.B. Fuller

Building a more resilient, agile network

Networking was another critical pressure point. The company's legacy SD-WAN solution lacked advanced load balancing, circuit resiliency, and consistent global performance. "We needed stronger operational performance and, above all, resiliency," explained Derek Shaw, Global Vice President, CIO at H.B. Fuller.

Reliance on Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) circuits kept operations reliable but also costly and inflexible. While integrating network security functions with cloud-based management and automation could help eliminate cost and constraints, long-tenured engineers feared moving away from an infrastructure that "just worked."

Choosing a unified Cisco stack – from top to bottom

H.B. Fuller is collaborating with long-term partner Cisco to create a modern, unified framework for managing cybersecurity across its distributed and interconnected digital landscape. With solutions like Cisco Secure Access and Cisco SD-WAN, the company is building a resilient, secure access service edge (SASE)-ready network architecture with AI-powered automation for end-to-end visibility, seamless user experiences, optimized performance, and multicloud connectivity.

To minimize risk and ease resource strain, the company adopted a phased approach to deployment – starting with physical network segmentation and secure access and then advancing to cloud-managed networking.

“Our journey has reshaped our operational approach and strengthened our security posture. We’re not just adapting to the digital age; we are leading the way.”

Derek Shaw, Global Vice President, CIO at H.B. Fuller

Delivering a seamless user experience with Secure Access

H.B. Fuller selected Cisco Secure Access to enforce least-privilege access while giving remote employees seamless, secure connectivity to applications and data across the hybrid, multicloud environment. Although Secure Access was relatively new at the time, H.B. Fuller trusted Cisco's strategic roadmap and strong integration with their existing network infrastructure – betting on Cisco as a foundation for future growth.

As an existing Cisco Umbrella customer, Shaw noted that the easy migration to Secure Access was a major benefit for his team – simplifying licensing, enabling a smooth operational transition, and reducing IT complexity and costs.

Secure Access delivers all the functionality of Umbrella, in addition to:

- **Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA)** to continuously verify every connection, regardless of location, user, or device.
- **Seamless integration** to swiftly incorporate new acquisitions into H.B. Fuller's security ecosystem.
- **User experience enhancements** for secure and frictionless access to public and private applications from any location, at any time.
- **Data loss prevention** protects sensitive data from unauthorized access, sharing, or loss across an organization's digital environment.

“Our Secure Access migration is going extremely well, due in part to the fact that we have a great partnership with the Cisco team; they've been with us every step of the way,” said Shaw.

Powering a resilient, future-ready global network with Cisco SD-WAN

H.B. Fuller replaced its legacy routing solutions with Cisco SD-WAN to improve resilience, optimize traffic flows, and enforce consistent security policies across all sites. Initial resistance from a risk-averse IT culture quickly shifted during the hands-on trial when they realized they didn't have to control the route or every circuit. "Having a centrally managed networking and security architecture across every location globally will be a huge advantage for my team," said Shaw. "It's something they are very excited about."

The team is currently rolling out SD-WAN worldwide, refreshing approximately 110 routers and replacing - MPLS with direct internet access (DIA) - a key benefit of SD-WAN that enables greater flexibility and cost savings. "We're removing all old devices and replacing them with a single Cisco SD-WAN solution that will integrate with Secure Access and our other Cisco products to create a full Cisco stack, from top to bottom."

Unlocking Business Value through IT Transformation

By unifying Cisco SD-WAN and Secure Access, H.B. Fuller is applying zero trust access, microsegmentation, and cloud delivered security to build a scalable, resilient SASE network. Shaw says, "Together, these solutions will give us better network management, centralized control, and opportunities for stronger performance."

Boosting speed and performance improves customer experience

Secure Access strengthens protection for H.B. Fuller's SaaS and internal applications, boosting speed and performance for employees while accelerating acquisitions through faster integration. Employees no longer navigate between VPNs; instead, they seamlessly access the applications they need to be productive and successful. For example, employees can generate quotes on the go using mobile devices - improving productivity, driving revenue, and elevating customer satisfaction.

"The shift to Cisco Secure Access has been pivotal for our global team and garnered positive feedback from employees," said Shaw. "With a highly mobile workforce traveling worldwide, we're making security as easy as possible to ensure employees are always protected, always connected, and able to work from anywhere."

Expected outcomes using Secure Access include:

- **Simplified and unified IT management** in a single console.
- **Risk mitigation and enhanced security posture** through least-privilege access and granular policy enforcement.
- **Enhanced remote user experience and productivity** through seamless, secure, and high-performance access.
- **Reduced risk of security breaches** with end-to-end protection across the distributed infrastructure.

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Simplified IT management accelerates business outcomes

SD-WAN won over IT admins by replacing four traditional VPN appliances with a cloud-based model that automatically connects employees to the nearest global location. Shaw noted that, “The administration of the platform is a significant improvement over what we were traditionally doing.” Expected outcomes include:

- **Global resiliency and performance** including better uptime, intelligent path selection, and improved load balancing across multiple circuits worldwide.
- **Stronger security** with built-in zero-trust security and a SASE-ready architecture.
- **Simplified and centralized management** of their entire global infrastructure.
- **Optimized application performance** through smarter traffic paths.
- **Accelerated acquisition onboarding** with standardized, secure technology.
- **Cost savings and resiliency** with better utilization of circuits, reduced downtime, and elimination of legacy VPN bottlenecks.
- **Future-ready architecture** to support AI-driven network demands and evolving cybersecurity threats.

Fueling “a well-oiled acquisition machine”

The success of H.B. Fuller’s SASE journey has drawn attention from outside experts, with one stock analyst describing the company as “a well-oiled acquisition machine” and their IT strategy as a “competitive advantage” with its ability to quickly elevate newly acquired companies to higher technology standards.

Supporting transformation at global scale

Cisco is playing a vital role in supporting H.B. Fuller’s larger digital transformation and acquisition projects.

- **Global SAP implementation** initiative requires a major investment in Cisco – refreshing network equipment, upgrading RF scanners, and rebuilding the network to support SAP’s demands. “Cisco is a critical component to ensuring the project’s success,” said Shaw.
- **Strategic mergers and acquisition execution** demands seamless IT execution – rapidly rebuilding environments, integrating sites, and standardizing on SAP within one year. “Cisco gives us the foundation to do it at speed and scale.”

Shaw says he is considering new initiatives with Cisco to further strengthen the company’s network and security posture.

- **Adopting Cisco ThousandEyes** for digital experience monitoring and network intelligence to further mitigate risks and simplify troubleshooting using AI.
- **Advancing its digital supply chain** by optimizing each stage to transform existing services, better meet customer needs, and continue driving efficiencies.

Building resilience to power what’s next

As H.B. Fuller continues shifting business processes to SaaS and the cloud, Shaw believes AI will be a powerful enabler of automation, resiliency, and protection “We’re just scratching the surface with AI – we have more in store.” As AI drives new capabilities and faster integrations, network demands will intensify – making a unified, SASE-ready infrastructure essential to stay ahead.

Shaw says with their investments in digital transformation, H.B. Fuller is well positioned for future opportunities. “Our journey has reshaped our operational approach and strengthened our security posture. We are not just adapting to the digital age; we are leading the way.”