

CASE STUDY

Leading Spanish Retailer Secures and Streamlines Business Operations with Fortinet Secure SD-Branch

Starting in 1981 as Auchan Group's first subsidiary outside France, Alcampo has grown to become one of Spain's leading retailers, employing 23,300 staff across 525 retail centers (80 hypermarkets and 445 supermarkets including 129 franchises), 52 petrol stations and offers e-commerce service.

In recognition of its human resources policy, positive work environment, and promotion of well-being, the company was awarded the [Top Employer](#) Seal.

In 2009, Alcampo launched its first innovative new online shopping service in Madrid, laying the foundations for today's global, intelligent, integrated range of e-commerce services.

By 2018, the company was already powered exclusively by 100% renewable energy sources and, in 2022, announced its goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2043.

Reducing Systems and Network Complexity

The increasing digitization of Alcampo's business has led to growing systems and network complexity. Business continuity in retail increasingly depends on reliable, secure communications between critical applications such as enterprise resource planning and an expanding range of wired and wireless Internet-of-Things (IoT) devices, including point of sale terminals, digital scales, barcode scanners, and a variety of logistics sensors.

But with very little integration of the company's previous networking and security infrastructure, and with such a wide diversity of IT and IoT devices often using different Wi-Fi access technologies and some too old to be patchable, systems and security administration were becoming increasingly challenging.

Basic security best practices such as internal network segmentation could only be implemented through access control lists, flattening the network architecture and making it exponentially more challenging to manage as it expanded and evolved.

The lack of integration also limited visibility and troubleshooting efficiency. So, when users reported problems, it would take valuable time and resources just to locate the root cause, whether in the network, external communications services, some security incident, or the application itself.

This increasing management complexity was, in turn, driving up operating expenses and limiting operational efficiency.

For Francisco Marcial Lorenzo, communications, information systems and cybersecurity manager at Alcampo, it was clear that it would need to replace the existing access infrastructure with a new converged networking and security architecture to reduce overall complexity while enhancing security, visibility, and operational efficiency.



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Francisco Marcial Lorenzo,
Communications, Information
Systems and Cybersecurity
Manager at Alcampo

Details

Customer: Alcampo

Industry: Retail

Location: Spain

Secure SD-WAN Locations: 525

Business Impact

- Enhanced visibility and operational efficiency with reduced administration complexity
- Reduced daily networking and security operations time by 30%
- Cut network operating expenses by 30%

Due to existing telecommunications contracts and to meet aggressive short-term deadlines, the current multi-protocol label switching infrastructure would remain in place. However, Lorenzo wanted to ensure they still had the flexibility to transition to more reliable, cost-effective alternatives at a future date. For this reason, it decided to use a software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) architecture.

Converged Security and Networking with Single-Pane Management

A shortlist of three potential SD-WAN solutions was evaluated based primarily on their degree of integration, ease of management, breadth of visibility (of both network communications and cyberthreats), and operating cost.

After extensive evaluation, Alcampo selected the Fortinet Secure SD-Branch solution, comprising the FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall (NGFW) with its integrated, advanced SD-WAN functionality, the FortiSwitch high-performance LAN switch, and the FortiAP wireless access point.

Secure SD-Branch follows the Fortinet philosophy of converging networking services into the security infrastructure through FortiOS, Fortinet's operating system, which is the foundation of the Fortinet Security Fabric. Organically built on a standard management and security framework, the Fabric is the industry's highest-performing and most expansive cybersecurity platform.

To enhance the protection of Alcampo's IoT devices, particularly those unable to be patched due to deprecated operating systems, the team was able to use the intrusion prevention system capabilities within FortiOS to apply a vulnerability mitigation technique called "virtual patching."

Using real-time threat intelligence from FortiGuard Labs (leveraging Fortinet's extensive global network of sensors and AI/ML-driven analysis centers), the virtual patching option tags potentially vulnerable devices and implements compensating controls by the FortiGate for those devices to prevent known exploits.

Through the FortiLink feature of FortiOS, the FortiGate network and security capabilities are extended to the access edge via FortiSwitch and FortiAP, which appear as logical firewall extensions. This enables Alcampo's administrators to discover and secure all their access devices and detect potentially harmful anomalies through FortiGate.

To provide centralized visibility, ongoing monitoring, and automation-driven provisioning and change management for FortiGate, FortiSwitch, and FortiAP across all sites in the entire WAN, Alcampo deployed FortiManager.

"The increased visibility and centralized control provided through FortiManager has been a game-changer," explains Lorenzo. "Instead of always being reactive, we can anticipate potential problems before they occur, reducing our support load and freeing us up to more proactive tasks such as planning and optimization."

FortiAnalyzer was also deployed to extend and enhance Alcampo's logging and analytics capabilities and assist with future compliance requirements.

"The solution allows us to analyze traffic end to end, from the user to the application server, making it much easier to triangulate problems. For example, one application issue was previously thought to be due to intermittent communications failures, which ultimately turned out to lie in the application server itself."

Finally, to provide Alcampo's IT staff with more flexible, secure access to critical resources and applications, the FortiClient endpoint protection solution was deployed along with FortiAuthenticator for an extended range of authentication capabilities.

Solutions

- FortiGate Next-Generation Firewall
- FortiSwitch
- FortiAP
- FortiManager
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiClient
- FortiAuthenticator

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A Secure Foundation for the Future

The initial objectives of increased visibility and reduced administration complexity have been more than met by the deployment of Fortinet Secure SD-Branch. Both network operating expenses and the total time spent on daily operations have now been reduced by around 30%.

“Looking to the future, we still have several smaller supermarkets with legacy technology that will need to be refreshed with additional Fortinet infrastructure, and as our business grows, its demands on IT and network services will continue to increase,” explains Lorenzo. “The difference now is that in partnership with Fortinet, we have built secure and scalable foundations to build that future.”

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