

SUPPORTING CLOUD APPLICATIONS AND SECURITY ACROSS GLOBAL OFFICE BRANCHES USING SD-WAN

RGIS

INDUSTRY
INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

LOCATION
AUBURN HILLS, MI

COMPANY SIZE
34,000 EMPLOYEES

COMPANY PROFILE

RGIS, or Retail Grocery Inventory Services, provides retail, healthcare, and commercial businesses with accurate and economical inventories and quality retail merchandising solutions. With over 200 offices and thousands of employees around the world, RGIS is equipped to offer a reliable alternative to in-house inventories. Founded in 1958, RGIS has been at the forefront of innovations in wireless technology and software to make inventory as efficient, accurate and secure as possible.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Aging firewall implementations were failing at a very high rate.
- Static IP addresses and branch routers made deploying new offices too complex.
- Network was not structured to make efficient use of cloud applications

Problem Situation

RGIS is a global services company, providing inventory services for larger retailers, healthcare providers, and manufacturers. With local offices around the world, RGIS is able to provide fast and accurate inventory services. Equipped with handheld devices such as inventory scanners and tablet applications, RGIS inventory teams physically count their customers entire inventory and provide real-time results based on their findings.

Inventory teams work out of more than 200 individual local offices, where their time and schedules are arranged. Each local office employs five or fewer team members and manages company programs locally. This includes homegrown applications for accounting, time and attendance for the employees, and custom written inventory applications.

In the past RGIS had to find different equipment to suit the needs of each individual office. These devices had static IP addresses and were connected to the datacenter through branch routers. This local approach sped up failure recovery in the field but created a much more complex infrastructure. With the number of devices and applications increasing, RGIS was seeing heavy performance penalties and a lack of visibility across its network.

With customers relying on RGIS to handle secure inventory information, the company aims to provide strong data security, process controls, and compliance. However, the aging implementation of conventional firewalls were well past its use and were failing at a very high rate.

RGIS needed a network that could support the regular addition and expansion of new offices but ran into additional network difficulties. It needed a solution that could easily replace its existing solution and ensure network-wide connectivity for all connected local offices. It also needed a solution that would be simple to set up when adding new offices to its network.

Solution Selection and Implementation: Coevolve and VMware SD-WAN by VeloCloud

RGIS knew its existing infrastructure needed to change in order to continue its growth and provide a continuous level of reliability and security. Rather than continue to invest in new equipment and solutions that were unpredictable, expensive, and difficult to manage, it looked for a solution that could meet all its needs.

“With our firewalls failing at an alarming rate and new offices becoming difficult to configure, we knew we needed a network that could support future growth. VMware SD-WAN has helped create an automated, flexible, cloud-first infrastructure that allows us to focus on growing RGIS into the future.”

— Cary Strickler, Network Manager, RGIS

“Our biggest advantage is the agility and efficiency of our branch offices. VMware SD-WAN ensures we can scale up our global offices without a high data center dependence or expensive bandwidth usage.”

— Nelson DeSousa, Director of IT Infrastructure, RGIS

RGIS employed Coevolve, a managed services provider specialized in delivering and implementing end-to-end SD-WAN solutions for enterprises. Coevolve implemented VMware SD-WAN by VeloCloud to transform RGIS’s branch office networking and separate network software services from its outdated equipment.

The company implemented VMware SD-WAN, deploying VMware SD-WAN Edges in 412 local and district offices around the world and connecting them to the centralized VMware SD-WAN Orchestrator, managed by Coevolve. This simplified network is monitored and optimized through a connection back to its global headquarters. However, its branches maintain agility and optimize bandwidth by no longer backhauling all connections through the enterprise datacenter.

All traffic and internet access through the network is enterprise-hosted and supported through a datacenter that is at a co-location. All VoIP deployments are cloud-hosted to increase connectivity and reduce bandwidth costs significantly. Most sites use a single internet connection with a single piece of hardware to make for simple deployments and a less complex architecture. This ability to install VMware SD-WAN without needing IT to install onsite will be crucial as it expands SD-WAN usage to all 520 offices.



Optimized Application Performance

With its reliance on individual site-by-site management, RGIS had high infrastructure costs and each branch utilized its own equipment and applications. Switching to SD-WAN allowed RGIS to provide more efficient cloud access and rely on SaaS applications such as Office 365 and Salesforce. Using SD-WAN, these applications can now be automatically routed to either cloud or premises-based to improve performance. Through this hybrid SD-WAN structure, most applications for RGIS are premises-based.

The optimized application performance allows RGIS to share information and applications across its entire infrastructure in a much more efficient way, improving communication and making its overall operations more effective.

Improved Network Visibility

With VMware SD-WAN by VeloCloud, RGIS has improved visibility across its entire network into the performance of individual network elements. This visibility is able to improve bandwidth elasticity, automatically configure network connections, and increase network performance.

Monitoring and maintaining applications is also simpler now as updates and new network policies can be enabled from the VMware SD-WAN Orchestrator and propagated through the entire network automatically. In the past, remote access to each Fortinet system was required. Now, global policies can be bulk configured.

Reduced Hardware Footprint

Before Coevolve and VMware SD-WAN, RGIS relied on Juniper firewalls and network solutions that were outdated, siloed, deployed across the entire network, and regularly failing several times a week. The constant failure of its firewalls made IT management difficult and spread resources thin across its global network.

This security was replaced by Fortinet firewalls in the datacenter only with SD-WAN providing sufficient protection to the rest of the network. VMware SD-WAN facilitates guest and corporate Wi-Fi and only allows specific traffic to go out from each office. Moving the firewalls to the enterprise datacenter and allowing SD-WAN to cover branch security improved the overall security of the RGIS network while greatly reducing its hardware footprint and making it much easier to maintain its infrastructure.

Able to Focus on Other Business-critical Tasks

With such a complex network, difficulties setting up new sites, and constant firewall failures and ISP issues, the RGIS IT department was spread thin. Rather than being able to focus on growth strategies and optimizing its infrastructure, the majority of the IT team's time was spent troubleshooting issues and running routine deployments.

With VMware SD-WAN, RGIS is able to "set and forget" many of the routine tasks inherent in managing and optimizing a complex infrastructure. RGIS is now able to focus on other business-critical tasks that can deliver a competitive advantage for the company.

Results

- Optimized cloud application performance
- Improved network visibility
- Reduced hardware footprint
- Able to focus on other business-critical tasks
- Network built to support future growth and innovation

Futureproof

Before VMware, RGIS had many legacy applications and outdated systems that drained resources and slowed its network performance. SD-WAN allowed RGIS to consolidate the number of offices and supported a push to go to the cloud. Legacy applications that were once focused and dependent on Oracle are now not locked in to a vendor and have much more flexibility.

This cloud-first strategy has moved applications away from physical dependence to create more efficient branch locations and an infrastructure that can be built upon for the future. Now, RGIS is able to take advantage of new technological advancements its former network could not have supported.