



Providing employees with the flexibility they want

Dell empowers its workforce to be productive from virtually anywhere with a stable, scalable remote access solution



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Alan Daines, Director of Security Engineering and Operations at Dell

Customer profile



Company	Dell
Industry	Technology
Country	United States
Employees	107,000
Website	www.dell.com

Challenge

To support a flexible workforce and enable employees to be productive from virtually anywhere, Dell needed a reliable and scalable remote access solution.

Solution

After Dell acquired SonicWALL, the Dell IT and SonicWALL teams collaborated on an SSL VPN solution that met Dell’s large-enterprise requirements and was deployed globally.

Benefits

- Company meets employees’ needs for work-life balance
- Dell’s demanding large-enterprise requirements met with VPN feature enhancements
- Employees can be productive from virtually anywhere with reliable, secure remote access to internal resources
- IT can support global organizational growth with scalable VPN deployment
- Company can streamline physical facilities

Solutions featured

- [Secure Remote Access](#)

“Any of our current 107,000 worldwide employees who are eligible for remote access — which is the majority — can use this tool at any time, and we have the scalability to support more users as our organization expands.”

Brendan O’Sullivan, Program Product Marketing Manager, Office of the CIO at Dell

One of Dell’s top priorities for its workforce is that they have the flexibility to work when and where they need to. So when the secure sockets layer (SSL) virtual private network (VPN) solution that Dell had been using became unstable and was preventing employees from being able to reliably use it to work remotely, the company decided to replace it.

“Our existing remote access solution was providing a poor user experience for our people when they were away from the office,” says Alan Daines, director of security engineering and operations at Dell. “They couldn’t connect to the Dell network at all or for any sustained periods of time and they require connectivity to be successful at their jobs.”

Dell listens to customers and delivers innovative technology and services that give them the power to do more. It does the same for its own workforce, and it has heard time and again that employees want a more flexible work-life balance. “People want to work from home certain days of the week or be able to leave and pick up their children and then be back online and work in the evening,” says Brendan O’Sullivan, program project manager reporting to the office of the chief information officer at Dell. “They want to get out of the shackles of the nine-to-five, and Dell has responded to that with our Connected Workplace initiative, which means you can do your job where and when you want to.”

To support that initiative, the IT team needed to provide employees with a reliable way to access the resources they require to be productive when working outside the office. “To enable a flexible workforce, our goal was a remote access solution that provided connectivity for our end users from a multitude of devices, regardless of their location or how long they needed to be connected,” says Daines.

Teams work together on large-enterprise feature enhancements

Fortunately for Dell, while it was in the process of looking for a new SSL VPN platform, it acquired SonicWALL and its Aventail E-Class Secure Remote Access (SRA) Series, so there was a solution right under its own roof. “Dell announced the acquisition, and we identified that SonicWALL had a product with the Aventail platform that would be a suitable fit,” says Daines.

The Dell IT team evaluated the E-Class SRA Series and then provided feedback to the SonicWALL team requesting enhancements to better meet Dell’s demanding internal IT requirements. “Our criteria as a large enterprise are very significant around scale and manageability,” says Daines. “We had a unique relationship with SonicWALL because we’re the same company. So we were able to work with the SonicWALL technical account manager and have direct access to its development team to request changes to the product to meet our requirements.”

The feature enhancements that the Dell IT and SonicWALL teams collaborated

Technology at work

Software

Dell™ SonicWALL™ Aventail E-Class Secure Remote Access (SRA) EX9000/EX7000/EX6000 appliances



on not only resulted in a highly scalable and easily managed VPN solution for Dell; they are now a standard part of the E-Class SRA Series. "Our work together was a conscious investment in the product," says Daines. "When customers look at the E-Class SRA solution, they'll know that it's gone through our internal IT requirements list and has been developed to meet our manageability and scalability needs as a large enterprise. Very few other VPN vendors could meet these needs."

IT can support growth with scalable deployment

To support more than 100,000 worldwide employees as well as allow for growth, Dell deployed 23 E-Class SRA appliances globally, including 10 SRA EX9000 appliances, 11 SRA EX7000 appliances and 2 SRA EX6000 appliances. The models and numbers of appliances used in each region were determined by how many users needed to be supported. "With the deployment of the 23 E-Class SRA appliances, we've enabled the capacity to support 255,000 users," says O'Sullivan. "Any of our current 107,000 worldwide employees who are eligible for remote access — which is the majority — can use this tool at any time, and we have the scalability to support more users as our organization expands."

As the E-Class SRA solution was rolled out in each region, the IT team made the client available to employees to download from the company's internal software center so they could start using it right away. Once global deployment was complete, the SonicWALL VPN client was pushed to a majority of the remaining employees. "If employees hadn't downloaded the client yet, the SonicWALL VPN icon appeared on their desktops with this push," says O'Sullivan.

Workforce can be productive from virtually anywhere

Employees can work when and where they want to with the E-Class SRA solution. They simply click on an icon on any of their Dell-managed devices and

connect to the Dell network, resources and applications they need to do their job. "The SonicWALL VPN provides that consistent, reliable connectivity to internal resources that our employees need to be productive anywhere — whether they're at home, a coffee shop or a customer site," says Daines. "And that supports Dell's larger vision of a connected and flexible workforce."

In other words, Dell is successfully delivering on its Connected Workplace initiative with the E-Class SRA solution and better meeting the needs of its people. "Two of the major benefits of the SonicWALL VPN are employee flexibility and work-life balance," says O'Sullivan. "People can work from home and not feel like they have to come into the office to get things done."

Employees share their positive feedback on company social media

With the previous VPN solution, Dell's internal social media site was inundated with complaints from employees venting their frustrations about problems getting connected and staying connected to the Dell network when working remotely. After the E-Class SRA solution was rolled out, the comments changed dramatically. "End-user perception about the SonicWALL VPN versus the old solution is light-years' difference," says Daines. "The employee feedback has been very positive. They're posting comments about how SonicWALL is rock solid and how happy they are that they can consistently connect and work all day."

Company can streamline physical facilities and lower overhead costs

As more and more employees are able to work remotely, it reduces the amount of office space Dell needs and supports its goal to consolidate buildings. "With the SonicWALL VPN, more employees can work from home and that means they don't need a large cube in the office anymore," says Daines. "Instead, when they come into the office, they can use a shared hot-desk area and that helps Dell save on facilities costs."

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Employees of newly acquired companies gain immediate access to Dell resources. By using the SonicWALL VPN, Dell can quickly provide employees of newly acquired companies with secure access to Dell internal resources, which wasn't possible with its previous VPN solution. "When we acquire companies, we don't immediately migrate all of their systems, but we need to provide their employees with a means to connect to certain resources on the Dell network even though they don't have Dell-managed devices yet," says Daines. "With the E-Class SRA platform and its endpoint control features, we can set up a web portal to give employees of newly acquired companies immediate, secure access to Dell resources from their devices."

IT team has more time for proactive projects with stable remote access solution

According to Daines, with the previous VPN solution the Dell IT team was flooded with thousands of IT support requests over a year's time due to its instability. Since implementing the E-Class SRA solution, IT staff members no longer have to spend as much time on firefighting and can spend more time on strategic projects. In addition, the centralized management tools of the E-Class SRA appliances streamline maintenance of the VPN. "Because the SonicWALL VPN is so stable and easy to manage, we're spending significantly less time on maintenance than we did with our old VPN solution," says Daines. "As a result, we can dedicate IT resources to proactive infrastructure life-cycle management and to our mission in IT of being a business enabler."

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