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Western Dental Services lowers operational costs with SonicWall GMS

Regional DHMO network centrally manages firewall and VPN appliances across 160 distributed sites using the SonicWall Global Management System.

Challenge

- Managing enterprise WAN security
- Ensuring reliable connectivity
- Protecting client data while moving to electronic medical records

Solution

- SonicWall GMS
- SonicWall E-Class NSA E5500
- SonicWall TZ 210
- SonicWall SSL VPN Appliance
- SonicWall SonicPoint-N
- SonicWall Virtual Assis

Benefits

- Global security management
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- Comprehensive, integrated security platform
- Enterprise-wide visibility and reporting
- Automatic resiliency and failover
- Ease-of-management features
- Outstanding support

"SonicWall GMS makes it a lot easier for us to push out and maintain consistent security configurations across 160 locations."

Chris Close
IT Operations Manager

Western Dental® Services, Inc. is one of California's oldest dental health maintenance organizations (DHMOs), with more than 4,000 employees and over 200 dental offices and clinics at 160 individual sites throughout California, Arizona and affiliated dental offices in Nevada. The network comprises over 1,700 dentists throughout California.

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The challenge: managing enterprise WAN security

Western Dental's wide area network (WAN) topology incorporates virtual private network (VPN) tunnels traversing a private Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) cloud, as well as wireless local area networks (WLANs) at its corporate headquarters and offsite disaster recovery (DR) data center. The organization provides its distributed sites with access to core business application resources, including scheduling, billing, financials and electronic medical records. As a healthcare organization, Western Dental has obligations to its patients, investors and governmental regulatory agencies to protect personal information. Maintaining confidentiality of personal information was particularly critical during the company's transition to electronic medical records.

To secure its widely distributed enterprise network, Western Dental needed a comprehensive and integrated security platform. The company's large distributed network frequently suffered from unreliable circuits and loss of Internet connectivity. Network outages at retail locations impacted the sequentialization of data for appointment books. This led to delayed reports for the business and reduced visibility into the financial performance of the other offices.

Western Dental needed an easy, reliable and resource-efficient way to deploy, maintain and upgrade its enterprise security components.

The solution: secure management of a large distributed network

"One of the things that sold us on SonicWall was GMS," asserted Chris Close, IT operations manager at Western Dental. "To have a central management system really simplifies things for us. SonicWall GMS makes it a lot easier to push out and maintain consistent security configurations across our 160 locations."

SonicWall™ Global Management System (GMS®) provides Western Dental with a flexible, powerful and intuitive solution to centrally manage and rapidly deploy SonicWall firewall and secure remote access solutions. It also delivers centralized real-time monitoring and comprehensive policy and compliance reporting.

Close uses GMS to manage a comprehensive, integrated security platform built extensively upon SonicWall solutions. The organization's corporate and DR sites are supported by paired High Availability (HA) SonicWall E-Class Network Security Appliance (NSA) E5500 Next-Generation Firewalls and SonicPoint-N wireless access points. The SonicPoints support 802.11 b/g/n WLANs at corporate and remote sites. Western Dental's remote sites rely on SonicWall TZ Series firewalls, which also maintain point-to-point VPN connectivity. The SonicWall SSL VPN appliance provides remote access for mobile laptop users in the field, while SonicWall Virtual Assist lets IT remotely troubleshoot and support these mobile devices.

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"When evaluating competitive solutions to upgrade our corporate infrastructure, it really made a lot more sense from an integration standpoint to go with SonicWall," said Close. "I think we have gotten a lot more out of SonicWall than we would have had we gone with other solutions."

Close has also appreciated the level of ongoing support he has received from SonicWall.

"The SonicWall support team is excellent," added Close. "The team has always been able to help us out. I can just call and they'll come right back with an answer for me."

The result: lower operational costs and improved centralized management of the network

"We would definitely recommend SonicWall to other companies that seek to implement security solutions across their network environment," said Close. "From a business perspective, SonicWall gives us ease of management. SonicWall's easy interface and technical capabilities allow me to manage our security requirements with minimum staff, so I can allocate resources to other projects. It definitely lowers operating costs."

For example, Close applied GMS to ease the upgrade of his entire remote firewall platform to the SonicWall TZ 210 Series, which can be deployed as Unified Threat Management (UTM) or Next-Generation Firewalls.

"With GMS, we can have multiple administrators using the interface to push out changes at the same time," stated Close. "GMS makes it easy for us to manage all of the VPN tunnels, as well as collect logs and provide good reporting across the entire network.

Because it doesn't take a lot of effort to secure our system, I can spend a lot more time focusing on real business requirements and business needs."

Moreover, SonicWall Gateway Anti-Virus, Anti-Spyware, Intrusion Prevention, and Application Intelligence and Control services deliver in-depth protection against sophisticated attacks.

"SonicWall helps us a lot in securing personal patient information, because it is simple to use and gives us robust protection," said Close. "SonicWall's support for two-factor authentication and one-time passwords helps us stay compliant with HIPAA."

To ensure reliable connectivity, SonicWall solutions are purpose-built for resilient performance, featuring high-availability failover between gateway firewalls, as well as 3G Internet failover.

"The ability to failover to 3G allows me to keep the business running," said Close. "One of the things I like about SonicWall is the ability to balance across multiple ISPs without having to implement BGP [Border Gateway Protocol]. This eliminates a huge amount of complexity from our environment."

Close added: "The SonicPoints alleviate the need to hire an electrician to install power: they deploy very easily, and with PoE, we just run an Internet cable."

"Ultimately, our patients are happier because we make it easier for them to not only access their electronic medical records, but trust that their data will be kept safe and secure," concluded Close.

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