

VERTICAL:	Technology
HEAD OFFICE:	United Kingdom
GLOBAL FOOTPRINT:	4 Continents
CORE TEAM MEMBERS:	650
REMOTE USERS:	8000

CloudFactory Boosts Network Scalability, Agility, and Security with Cato

About Cloud Factory

Based in Reading, UK, CloudFactory provides more than 8,000 remote data analysts from developing markets to support its corporate customers' AI development projects. CloudFactory calls those remote workers "cloud workers." The company started in Nepal 11 years ago and currently has over 650 core team members working in offices on four continents to support its cloud workers. Before Cato, CloudFactory maintained separate operating environments at each office location and two "delivery centers" in Kenya and Nepal that housed work environments for about 1,000 cloud workers each. WAN connections among locations, cloud workers, and clients were mostly IPsec VPN's. Security was provided mainly by appliances.

Complex Infrastructure Made Meeting Customer SLA's Difficult

Scale and agility are issues for any growing organization. For a company aiming to grow to a million remote workers, those issues are compounded. Just ask CloudFactory. Based in Reading, UK, CloudFactory provides thousands of remote data analysts from developing markets to support its customer organizations' AI development projects. CloudFactory calls these remote data analysts "cloud workers."

"We started as a small outfit in Nepal about 11 years ago and we've moved into 45 different countries with a workforce of over 650 core team members and more than 8,000 cloud workers," says Kevin Juma, Technology Operations Manager at CloudFactory.

"CloudFactory's focus is creating a million jobs. This essentially stems from the different projects and clients that we have and the different programs that we have with our cloud workers to train them and empower them to be better leaders through delivering work for our clients."

With offices on four continents and cloud workers all over the world, CloudFactory found network and security operations challenging at times. Before Cato, CloudFactory maintained individual operating environments at its office locations and its globally dispersed “delivery centers” in Kenya and Nepal, which, until Covid, hosted up to 1,000 contract workers each.

“We had to maintain a lot of complex infrastructure, including routers, switches, and firewalls,” says Shayne Green, CloudFactory Head of Security Operations. “That meant configuring VLANs, maintaining MAC filtering lists and network and Web filtering rules, and building in as much redundancy as possible to give our workers the connectivity quality and security necessary to serve our clients.”

Juma agrees. “It took a lot of man hours to implement and manage security protections, optimize our network for resiliency, and monitor it all. We often had to deal with ISP outages, equipment failure, and poor security policy implementation. At times these issues would cascade and make it difficult for us to achieve the level of scalability we needed to onboard more cloud workers and deliver meaningful, secure work to our clients.” Those issues also had an impact on the ability of CloudFactory to meet its SLA agreements.

CloudFactory started looking for a way to deliver better security, network agility, and scalability for fast growth, while relieving the IT staff of as much of the infrastructure configuration and management load as possible.

CloudFactory Turns to SASE, Chooses Cato

Juma and Green started evaluating SD-WAN and SASE solutions. “We wanted to be asset light,” says Green, “and get away from supporting a lot of heavy infrastructure. We needed a dynamic solution that didn’t have to rely on fixed locations and single points of presence, that could scale by leveraging a global network we didn’t have to manage and deliver a high level of security.”

Juma and Green were not impressed with the solutions offered by SD-WAN providers. “Most of them were appliance based and required a high level of administration,” says Green. That’s why they turned to SASE.

“SASE would allow us to be hands free without any on-premises equipment and we wouldn’t need to invest our time setting up the solution,” says Juma. “We could entrust the vendor to manage our security, networking, and routing capabilities.”

Juma and Green contacted Cato and the rest is history. “From day one, it was clear that Cato was passionate about our business, and keen on what we were trying to do,” says Green. “They aligned with our mission and believed they could really help us scale and get there. That was a key reason we decided to engage with them further.”

Cato SASE Cloud optimally connects all enterprise network resources, including branch locations, the hybrid workforce, and physical and cloud datacenters, into a secure global, cloud-native service. Connecting a location to Cato is just a matter of installing a simple Cato Socket appliance that links automatically to one of Cato’s 75+ Points of Presence (PoPs) and its fast, global private backbone. Cato Edge SD-WAN extends the Cato SASE Cloud to provide prioritized and resilient connectivity over multiple last-mile links in physical locations. At the same time, Cato SDP Client and Clientless access enable secure and optimized application access for users everywhere, including at home and on the road.

Cato’s cloud-native security edge, Cato SSE 360, converges a Secure Web Gateway (SWG), Cloud Access Security Broker (CASB), Data Loss Prevention (DLP), Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA), and Firewall as a Service (FWaaS) with Advanced Threat Protection. It fully enforces granular corporate access policies on all applications on-premises and in the cloud, protecting users against threats and preventing sensitive data loss.

A two-week Cato proof of concept with 10 cloud workers in each location and VPN connections to clients and workers was very successful. Support was also excellent. “We had a few small issues early on that Cato resolved very quickly,” says Green. The workers were impressed as well.

Smooth Deployment, Unprecedented Agility and Visibility

CloudFactory then moved to a full deployment across locations.

“The deployment with Cato was seamless,” says Juma. “Previously, we would spend weeks coming up with routing optimizations, getting up and running, and assuring users of the availability of what we built. Cato took all of that off our hands and now we have turnarounds of five or ten minutes based on Cato’s wide network of PoPs.”

Agility and scalability are much improved. “With Cato we have a very dynamic, scalable network where we can onboard new workers in minutes” says Green, “and make sure they operate within the realms we specify. Our team can work from anywhere, managing and monitoring connectivity. If we lose access to a site, we no longer have to connect directly into an appliance. Without all that overhead we can now focus on other areas of the business.”

Troubleshooting network issues is vastly simpler. “We used to have entire sleepless nights troubleshooting the network for our clients, with our cloud workers expected to deliver work by the hour,” says Juma. “Now with Cato we just fire a support ticket and Cato is on it. Within 30 minutes to an hour it’s resolved. And we can monitor every single step with Cato’s QOS metrics. We have goggles and eyes we never had before.”

Security is much better as well.

Green agrees. “Cato gives us secure access with encryption, Web filtering, IPS, next-gen anti-malware, and visibility of what our workers are doing, so that our clients can be confident in the quality of the connection coming into them.”

Juma and Green also noted the access they had to Cato. “We have a very close relationship with Cato’s account management team,” says Juma. We get a sense that we are always on their mind, that they understand our business, and their solutions are aligned with our needs. They really help us understand how we can maximize the use of Cato and they’re committed to helping us fulfill the Cloud Factory vision.” Ultimately, CloudFactory found an architecture in Cato SASE Cloud for achieving its corporate goal.

“Cato SASE Cloud gives us great scale, great high availability and resilience, and great visibility,” says Green. “And most importantly a platform to achieve a workforce of one million cloud workers, which would’ve been more challenging had we have managed the solution ourselves.”

**Kevin Juma,
Technology Operations Manager**