

The Flügger Group Gains Network Flexibility and Security with Cato and Secher Security

About Flügger

Based in Denmark, the Flügger Group is a manufacturer and retailer of paint, wood protection, spackle, and wallpaper products and related tools. Today the growing company has five manufacturing plants and more than 400 stores in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, and China. Before Cato, Flügger relied on MPLS and multiple security point products to provide secure WAN connectivity among retail stores, datacenters, and manufacturing plants.

The Challenge: Simplicity and Flexibility

In an era of digital transformation, manufacturers need fast, secure WAN connections with datacenter applications, retailers, suppliers, partners, and the cloud. Retailers in turn need fast connectivity with manufacturers and their own datacenter and cloud applications.

As both a Danish paint and related products manufacturer and retailer, the Flügger Group needed all of those things. With five manufacturing plants and more than 200 of its own retail locations and 200 franchise stores in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and China, the Flügger Group was in the midst of a major expansion and digital transformation.

Prior to Cato, Flügger relied on MPLS WAN connections and multiple security point solutions to provide secure WAN connectivity. “Our MPLS solution was secure, but it was a very closed, inflexible environment that we couldn’t make changes to without a lot of time and effort,” says Jan Jørgensen, IT Project Leader. “We had to do a lot of workarounds.” Flügger was opening, closing, and moving a lot of stores and it took much too long to get them up and running with MPLS. “It got quite difficult to meet our deadlines,” says Rune Skovsgaard, Head of IT.

Flügger was also modernizing its manufacturing plants.

“We were inviting more suppliers and partners directly into our network, including those who would help support and maintain plant IT,” says Skovsgaard. “They had to get into a very closed network to do their work. We needed an environment that was both more open than MPLS and as secure, and, of course, financially attractive.”

With all its point solutions, security was also inflexible and time-consuming. “We couldn’t work with our firewalls, honestly,” says Jørgensen. “If we had to make any changes or give an external provider access, it was impossible. It took a lot of work and time even to just open and close the firewall for a specific partner. Sometimes we just left it open.”

Flügger Adopts Cato

Looking to simplify networking and security and make it all easy to manage, Flügger turned to Secher Security, a Danish IT security consultant firm, for help. “They had all sorts of different vendor solutions and partners involved in a lot of different IT projects,” says Kristian Secher, Secher Security CEO. “They were losing money on all those different consultancy services. Immediately we saw that we could simplify their environment with the Cato solution.

The Flügger Group took to the Cato solution almost right away. “Things moved quickly and easily because the Flügger team was very interested in the solution and eager to help get the job done and make it a success,” says Secher.

Cato connects all global enterprise network resources — including branch locations, physical and cloud datacenters, and mobile users — into a single secure, global, cloud-native network service. With all WAN and Internet traffic consolidated in the cloud, Cato applies a suite of robust security services to protect all traffic, including anti-malware, next-generation firewall, and IPS.

Connecting a location to Cato is just a matter of installing a simple preconfigured Cato Socket appliance, which links automatically to the nearest of Cato’s more than 70 globally dispersed points of presence (PoPs). At the local PoP, Cato provides an onramp to its global backbone and security services. The backbone is not only privately managed for zero packet loss and 5 9’s uptime, it also has built in WAN optimization to dramatically improve throughput. Cato monitors network traffic and selects the optimum path for each packet across the Cato backbone.

“Flexible Network, Flexible Partner

Aside from being impressed with the Cato solution, Skovsgaard found his Cato partners very flexible and easy to work with.

When we select a new supplier we look both at the technical solutions and whether it will be a good working environment,” says Skovsgaard. “With Cato we have a very flexible supplier that understands our requirements and is there when we need help.”

Many of Flügger’s stores are very small and Skovsgaard appreciated that Cato was willing to accommodate such small network environments. “Cato understood our business and adjusted its own business model and contracts so they would work for us,” says Skovsgaard.

“Cato give us both the security and flexibility we need,” says Jørgensen. “We can bring new partners into the network easily and securely. It’s also quick and easy to move, open, and close stores compared to how it was with our previous MPLS network, even when they’re in other countries and we have a single reliable supplier for network security instead of having to deal with a lot of different security vendors.”

After 12 months with all Flügger stores now up and running on Cato, the Cato solution has paid for itself compared to MPLS, and is now saving the company money. But there are more important benefits, according to Flügger. Jørgensen likes that Cato is an Internet solution. “With MPLS you’re bound to a certain Internet provider,” says Jørgensen. “Since Cato uses the Internet, it’s less expensive to maintain and we can shop around for a provider, which saves money.”

Jan Jørgensen
IT Project Leader, The Flügger Group

Rune Skovsgaard
Head of IT, The Flügger Group