

VERTICAL:	Retail
HEAD OFFICE:	Netherlands
FOOTPRINT:	Across Europe
PARTICIPATING STORES:	50,000
COUNTRIES:	60+
RETAIL CLIENTS:	160+
SHOPPERS:	100,000,000 ANNUALLY

BrandLoyalty Achieves Fast Performance and Network Maturity with Cato

About Brand Loyalty

Based in the Netherlands, BrandLoyalty provides winning loyalty campaigns by connecting high-frequency retailers, our partners, and shoppers. BrandLoyalty fully supports the retailer's journey, from strategy to solution and execution.

The Network Challenges of a Global Enterprise

IT leaders know all too well the challenges of global MPLS solutions. The high costs of global MPLS circuits are well documented but less spoken about are the little things like the lack of network visibility and the integration challenges needed to keep the solution operational to say nothing of the problems with moving to the cloud. Such were the challenges facing BrandLoyalty.

A provider of customer loyalty and incentive programs to food retailers worldwide, BrandLoyalty infrastructure connects offices across Europe. "We work with leading global brands & licenses such as Disney or Zwilling that demand a reliable, secure, well-managed infrastructure from their partners, says Ben de Laat, head of IT security at BrandLoyalty. "It's very important for us to have not only high-quality offices, desks, chairs, awesome coffee, and great lunches, but high-quality Internet and well-managed end-user devices."

With limited IT resources, BrandLoyalty had be very careful about the technology choices it makes. The company was in the middle of a full migration to Microsoft Azure with a WAN infrastructure that was complex and not well suited for the cloud.

“Our locations were connected by MPLS and two Internet lines with dynamic routing and failover at each site,” says Arne van Vuuren, Head of IT Operations. “We had WAN optimizers and firewall appliances at each location, with failover for each.”

The infrastructure was technically sophisticated but had frequent issues. “It was not a well-integrated solution,” says van Vuuren. “There was little visibility and too many end user nuisances. I was always pushing our suppliers to solve our constant network issues. We needed to come up with another solution using SD-WAN that was better integrated and more cloud friendly.”

BrandLoyalty Finds a True SASE Solution with Cato

Brand Loyalty created an RFP and evaluated four supposed SASE suppliers, one of which was Cato. While de Laat was impressed with Cato right away, van Vuuren was skeptical. “I didn’t believe the Cato solution could work as well as they were claiming,” says van Vuuren. “I thought they were a bunch of cowboys, honestly, and that the network would buckle under all the Zoom and Microsoft Teams we worked with.”

Two RFP requirements were that the solution be well integrated and easily managed centrally. Three of the vendors couldn’t meet those requirements. “They offered customized solutions, even our own custom points of presence,” says van Vuuren. “We didn’t want something complex and tailor made for us. We wanted a solution like Office 365, a straightforward cloud service used by everyone that could scale quickly and easily as we grew, have continual service improvements, and gain new functionality without a lot of new cost. And we wanted a SASE solution, not one that required on-premises firewall appliances with all their updates.”

Cato connects all global enterprise network resources — including branch locations, mobile users, and physical and cloud datacenters — 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, content filtering, and IPS.

Connecting a location to Cato is just a matter of installing a simple 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. Mobile users run across the same backbone, benefiting from the same optimization features, improving remote access performance. Paradoxically, both de Laat and van Vuuren decided on Cato during a phone call with another contender.

“We had an epiphany,” says de Laat. De Laat asked the other vendor how they could accommodate BrandLoyalty if it decided to implement a CASB solution in two years. There was a lot of silence on the other end, and then the contender said they would have to do it in only one of our customized PoPs.”

That was when it hit De Laat and van Vuuren that they were done with the customized route. They wanted something new and Cato was the only contender offering a new solution. “It was clear Cato was the most mature SASE solution out there,” says van Vuuren.

Cato Delivers a Fast Transition, Performance, and Visibility

The transition to Cato was fast and easy.

“Officially it took four months, but it was really more like two- and-a-half,” says van Vuuren. Setting up the Cato Sockets was a breeze, and the performance was fast from day one. “It took an afternoon for our implementation partner, to set up all the locations,” says van Vuuren. “I told some friends about the Cato rollout, and they didn’t believe me.”

Aside from its top-notch performance, including for Zoom and Teams, configuring the Cato solution was also easy and visibility was dramatically better than with the company’s previous network. “We made a bunch of rules, implemented them, and it all worked right out of the box,” says de Laat. “Immediately we saw new things on our network such as users accessing servers that were supposed to have been decommissioned.

Aside from the security functionality Cato offers, Cato’s visibility and control add a lot to your security posture. We have so much more in-depth knowledge our own network than we ever had before.” And Cato’s remote and home users get the same network performance and security as those in the office. “I always assume that the solution a vendor describes is much more beautiful than it is in reality, but with Cato the promises were all true,” says van Vuuren. “Cato’s solution has pushed BrandLoyalty forward with a mature, professional network, which we really needed. And we still have a Cato library of unused functionality to help make our network even more mature down the road.”

Arne van Vuuren,
Head of IT Operations