



Sports Authority Relies On The Easy-To-Administer, Easy-To-Use FirePass Controller For Secure Remote Access

Customer Profile

Company Name:

Sports Authority

Location:

Englewood, Colorado

Industry:

Retail

Web site:

<http://www.thesportsauthority.com/>

Company information:

- The nation's largest full-line sporting goods retailers, offering a comprehensive high-quality assortment of brand name sporting apparel and equipment at competitive prices.
- Operates 386 stores in 45 states under The Sports Authority®, Gart Sports®, Sportmart® and Oshman's® names.

About Sports Authority

On August 4, 2003, The Sports Authority, Inc. and Gart Sports Company, the largest and second largest U.S. sporting goods retailers, respectively, completed a merger that created the nation's preeminent full-line sporting goods chain. The combined company is now known as The Sports Authority, Inc.

About South Seas Solutions

South Seas Solutions provide IT solutions to the Colorado business community, including network enhancement and security management tools featuring the latest technologies. South Seas is experienced in the design, installation, management and integration of networks by combining advanced technologies from a variety of top vendors, including F5 Networks.

Executive Summary

Sports Authority needed reliable, secure access to any application from any location, using any device. Failure to consistently connect via a laptop out in the field, or from a PC at home to the home office, could result in lost hours, lost productivity, user frustration, and unnecessary trips back into the office to get the critical information required. F5's FirePass gave Sports Authority's remote users, employees, and vendors secure and reliable access to any authorized application from any Web-enabled device, from any location, without requiring special software or configuration on the remote device, and with no modifications to the back-end resources being accessed.

Challenge

For Sports Authority employees, executives and vendors, fast, reliable, and secure remote access to any application while on the road or working from home was key. As the largest sporting retailer in the U.S., Sports Authority has numerous field staff continuously traveling the country. Reliable access to information in the home office while at a remote location was of paramount importance, and instrumental to ensuring the best possible productivity. Employees and executives in the field needed to access email, share files, and quickly access various intranet sites. Upper management needed to track sales information from wherever they were at, on a daily basis. The IS department for Sports Authority needed to be able to administrate their systems remotely, from any location, at any time. And third party vendors required access to information at various sites, but also needed to be blocked from other sites based on policies set by Sports Authority.

Failure of any of these audiences to consistently connect via a laptop out in the field, or from a PC at home to the home office could result in lost productivity, user frustration, and unnecessary trips back into the office.

And of course, secure access and data transmission for all of these audiences was critical as well.

Joseph Girodo, Group Unix Manager for Sports Authority, was tasked with finding a solution that would enable Sports Authority workers to securely access any application and information they needed from any location, using any type of device - whether it was a cell phone, laptop, or home PC. The initial solutions he tried, however, were less than satisfactory.

"The product we had in here before was not very secure - it was basically a thick client loaded on a PC," said Girodo. "For example, a third party vendor that had the client could tunnel into our network and go anywhere they wanted. We didn't have the ability to coral them or limit their access to certain servers, specific to the data they required."

Cost was also an issue - Sports Authority had relied on a private network that was more costly per user as opposed to regular Internet access. Worse, end users often couldn't access information or couldn't get the system to work - resulting in increased support calls, lost productivity and frustration for everyone involved. There were other problems as well, including the hassle of installing and maintaining client software on every remote device - but the main problems revolved around accessibility challenges, administrative headaches, and a system that was limited in terms of the applications it supported.



Girodo took action, contacting technology reseller South Seas Solutions and Vice President of Sales Jeff Kowalski to find a new solution.

"They (Sports Authority) came to us with a specification that was pretty challenging," said Kowalski. "They have a wide range of systems and applications, and they wanted access to any one of those, specific to who you were, anywhere in the world, without having to load a client on the PC."

Kowalski took the challenge, suggesting that Sports Authority try the FirePass Controller, from F5.

Solution

F5's FirePass® controller provides secure remote access to corporate applications and data via standard web browser technology. It enables companies to extend secure remote access to anyone connected to the Internet using desktops, laptops, PDAs, kiosks and more - while eliminating the need for complex IPsec VPNs.

The FirePass is the first SSL VPN solution with complete cross-platform support. Extending its support for any IP application to Macintosh, PocketPC and Linux clients, in addition to Windows, and expanding client and application security for Web, email and file application access, FirePass delivers the industry's most ubiquitous solution for secure application access.

It also offers the only open API (Application Programming Interface) and SDK (Software Developer's Kit) that enables 3rd party application vendors to build seamless, secure remote access into their client applications.

FirePass offers key benefits for companies looking for remote access solutions, and includes:

- Dynamic policy engine -- rules-based engine authenticates users, authorizes access and applies client security policies based on the user and device being used for remote access.
- Dynamic, simplified and scalable management -- enables enterprises to easily manage access policies for a large and growing number of resources and users.
- End-to-end security -- support for unified end-point security and integrated application layer security protects business applications and enterprise networks from worms and viruses. Ensures no confidential information is left behind on the client device.
- Reduced cost - with no pre-installed client software and with streamlined administration, the FirePass Controller lowers deployment and ongoing maintenance costs.

For Sports Authority, FirePass met the various challenges they'd previously faced almost immediately.

"I wanted something that was easy to administrate, something that end users could access without having to load software on their PC, and an easy interface that didn't require a big learning curve," said Girodo. "FirePass gave us that."

The set up and on-going maintenance, or lack thereof, of the FirePass product was also attractive to Sports Authority, according to Kowalski.

"FirePass became a clear winner because of its ease of administration and configuration. I think that's one of the main reasons why he (Girodo) stuck with it."

Other aspects of the Sports Authority business are benefiting as well, thanks to FirePass.

"We have a department for asset protection, which travels quite a bit, and their utilization of



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FirePass is saving us a lot of time and money because instead of waiting until they can get to an access point like a store or the corporate office, they can log into our network anywhere on the road," Girodo stated.

And according to Girodo, it's the positive response from those out in the field that also makes FirePass a winner.

"When we switched platforms a lot of users expressed that this was a lot easier, a lot faster, a lot cooler," he said. "Of course, with this amount of network complexity you're going to have issues no matter which remote access platform you go with, but with F5 the issues are minimal compared with the other solutions we tried."

The fact that FirePass technology is scalable and will keep up with Sports Authority's growing demands - and their growing number of workers on the road - also appealed to Girodo.

"It's ease of use, access to multiple avenues, failover capability, and the variety of things you can do with it via remote access is excellent," he stated. "Expandability is also important - FirePass is something that can grow with your company, and your company can grow accordingly without having to replace the technology. That's important to us."

About F5

F5 enables organizations to successfully deliver business-critical applications and gives them the greatest level of agility to stay ahead of growing business demands. As the pioneer and global leader in Application Traffic Management, F5 continues to lead the industry by driving more intelligence into the network to deliver advanced application agility. F5 products ensure the secure and optimized delivery of applications to any user - anywhere. Through its flexible and cohesive architecture, F5 delivers unmatched value by dramatically improving the way organizations serve their employees, customers and constituents, while lowering operational costs. Over 6,000 organizations and service providers worldwide trust F5 to keep their businesses running. The company is headquartered in Seattle, Washington with offices worldwide. For more information go to www.f5.com.