Fisher & Company Slashes MPLS Costs, Improves WAN Performance with Cato's Cloud-Based SD-WAN

Background

Fisher & Company is the parent company of Fisher Dynamics, a seating-systems and mechanisms company and Fisher Dynamics Metal Forming, a safety-critical precision metal parts company.

The manufacturing company has 1700 employees and is headquartered out of St. Clair Shores, Michigan. There are three other US locations — Michigan, Indiana, and Texas — and five more international locations — China, India, Germany, Mexico, and Poland. An instance runs in the Azure cloud.

The sites in Mexico and Texas were connected via MPLS to the St. Clair Shores headquarters. All locations except for Texas had direct Internet connections, secured with local, provider-managed firewalls. Applications included ERP from Plex Systems, Microsoft Office 365, Nasuni for file replication, and voice from ShoreTel, Inc.
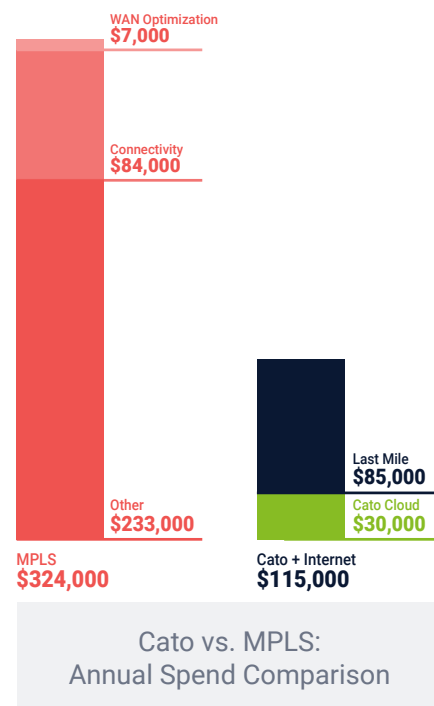
The Challenges with Legacy MPLS

Like many companies, Fisher & Company relied on MPLS for its global network. And like many companies, Fisher was tired of the high costs, limited bandwidth, and complexities of MPLS services.
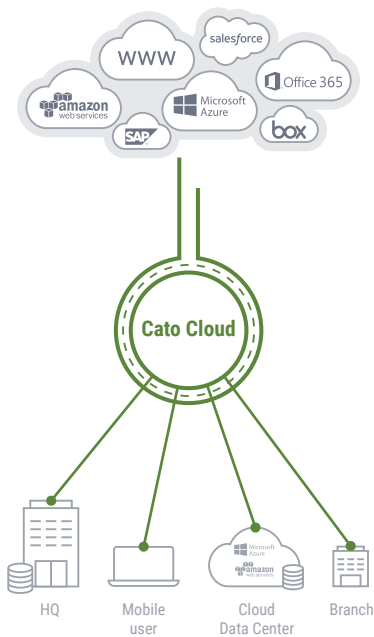
The company spent $27,000 a month for a managed, secure MPLS service. The company's 10 Mbits/s connection from the US to Mexico alone cost $7,000 per month. And three Riverbed WAN optimizers meant a one-time outlay of nearly $60,000 with an annual renewal of $7,000.

With stacks of appliances, including firewalls, WAN optimizers, and routers, comes complexity and a breeding ground for problems. "Our MPLS provider proposed this very intricate architecture that looked like it was from a CCNA test," says Kevin McDaid, systems manager at Fisher & Company, "The sites ended up with dual routers running HSRP (the Hot Standby Router Protocol) to load balance traffic between them. But when the protocol failed, so did the location."

Survivability was a challenge in other ways as well. Backhauling traffic across the MPLS network created a single point of failure. "When the provider's MPLS router failed, we lost our headquarters and the entire company stopped working," he says. "I was woken up in the middle of the night on several instances because a fiber cut or power outage had taken down a site, or to get the provider to fix a minor firewall problem."

Finally, managing the MPLS and security infrastructure was painful. McDaid and his team had to jump between "tons" of management interfaces, he says. They could monitor firewalls and the network, but the provider had to make any changes. "Something as simple as enabling access to a website through our firewall meant having to call support. It was very frustrating."

WAN Optimization
$7,000

Connectivity
$84,000

Other
$233,000

MPLS
$324,000

Last Mile
$85,000

Cato Cloud
$30,000

Cato + Internet
$115,000

Cato vs. MPLS:
Annual Spend Comparison

Cato Cloud: As Good as MPLS at a Fifth of the Price

Fisher began looking at SD-WAN as an alternative. "We trialed a managed SD-WAN service, but the provider was difficult to work with," says McDaid. "The management console was very complicated and you needed training just to run the reporting. They wanted us to submit requests for configuration changes; it was like our MPLS provider all over again."

Instead, Fisher turned to Cato. Cato's SD-WAN service integrates advanced security with an affordable global, SLA-backed backbone — the Cato Cloud. With Cato, McDaid could retain control over his network and security infrastructure yet gain the agility and scaling benefits of a cloud service.

McDaid initially added Cato alongside his MPLS services in his main offices, using static routes in his router to split the traffic between the customer edge MPLS router and the Cato Socket, Cato's zero-touch SD-WAN appliance. The headquarters in Michigan and his offices in Texas and Mexico were connected across 25 Mbits/s Internet connections to the local Cato PoPs.

After validating the deployment, McDaid expanded the capacity of his headquarters' Internet connection and switched all of his offices to the Cato Cloud. The offices also had 25 Mbits/s Internet connections from their local ISPs. The Cato Cloud supports Microsoft Azure connectivity out of the box, which allowed McDaid to easily add Fisher's Azure instance. Mobile users established secure tunnels to the Cato Cloud from Cato's mobile client that ran on their devices. All users and locations were segmented and protected with Cato's Firewall as a Service.

"The costs of our connection to Mexico alone dropped more than 80 percent, and we received twice the capacity," says McDaid.

> " The loss and latency of the Cato Cloud is comparable to our MPLS service "

Kevin McDaid,
Systems Manager

With Cato, Fisher radically simplified it's network, connecting its mobile users, eight locations, and Azure instance to the Cato Cloud.
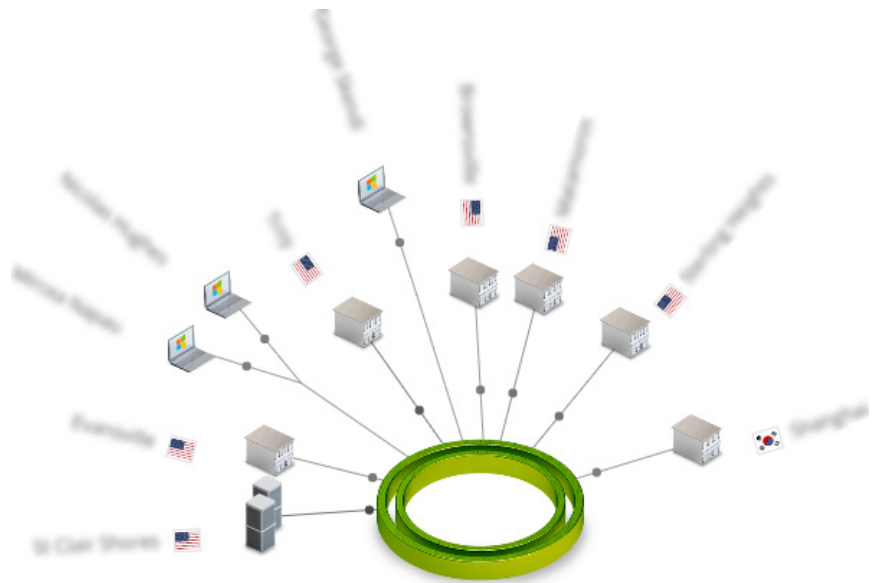
Cato Improves User Experience and Simplifies Network Management

Despite paying so much less for Cato, Fisher maintained and even improved its application delivery. Call quality has not changed since moving voice from MPLS to the Cato Cloud. Applications have become more responsive. "Users definitely feel it in their user experience. Things, like screen refreshes of our ERP system, seem to be a lot quicker with Cato," he says.

The improvement was enabled by the additional bandwidth, and the Cato Cloud's network characteristics. "The loss and latency of the Cato Cloud are comparable to our MPLS service," he says.

Management has also become much easier. The Cato Management Application gives McDaid full control over his network and security infrastructure. And instead of jumping between many consoles, McDaid can manage everything from one interface.

Resiliency improved with Cato. Internet- and cloud-bound traffic are no longer backhauled to Fisher's headquarters in Michigan, which created the single point of failure in Fisher's old network design. Dual active lines connect every location to Cato's fault-tolerant architecture. Internet- and cloud-bound traffic are sent directly onto the Internet; enterprise WAN traffic is sent across Cato's optimized backbone to the appropriate location.
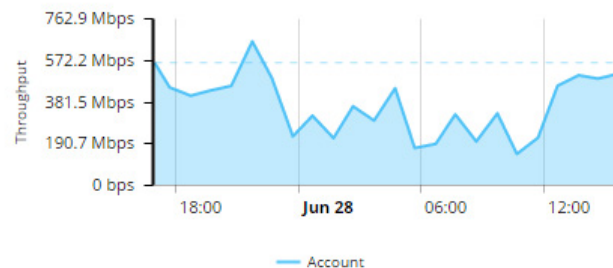
> " I don't have exact percentages, but uptime has certainly increased," he says, "I can definitely sleep better at night with Cato "

> " Users definitely feel it in their user experience. Things, like screen refreshes of our ERP system, seem to be a lot quicker with Cato "
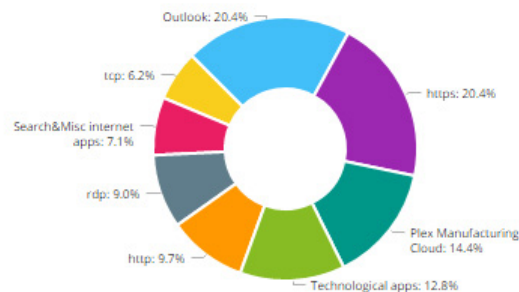
Kevin McDaid,
Systems Manager

Management became easier with Cato providing one portal into the WAN.

About Cato

Cato Networks provides organizations with a cloud-based and secure global SD-WAN. Cato delivers an integrated networking and security platform that securely connects all enterprise locations, people, and data. Cato Cloud cuts MPLS costs, improves performance between global locations and to cloud applications, eliminates branch appliances, provides secure Internet access everywhere, and seamlessly integrates mobile users and cloud datacenters into the WAN.

Based in Tel Aviv, Israel, Cato Networks was founded in 2015 by cybersecurity luminary Shlomo Kramer, co-founder of Check Point Software Technologies and Imperva, and Gur Shatz, co-founder of Incapsula.

For more information:

🌐 www.CatoNetworks.com

🐦 @CatoNetworks

Where do you want to start?

SECURE CLOUD-BASED SD-WAN

AFFORDABLE MPLS ALTERNATIVE

BRANCH APPLIANCE ELIMINATION

CLOUD DATACENTER INTEGRATION

MOBILE ACCESS OPTIMIZATION

SIMPLE NETWORK AUTOMATION

Global Backbone. Cloud-Based SD-WAN. Firewall as a Service. All in One