



Leading beef processor brings new level of business efficiency with cloud strategy enabled by EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform

American Foods Group assures performance and reliability for nationwide branches accessing applications in Microsoft Azure and Microsoft Office 365 suite

Next time you flip a burger or steak on your backyard grill, thank a farmer—and American Foods Group. Chances are, AFG is the company that brought it to you. Every day, grocery stores, stadium concessions, institutional kitchens, and other foodservice providers around the world serve up USDA beef products processed, packaged, and delivered by American Foods Group.

Since 1946, AFG has partnered with family farms to bring finished beef products to the general public, following the highest standards of quality, integrity, and honesty with a commitment to the humane treatment of animals. The company is now the fifth largest beef processor in the U.S., processing and shipping over five million pounds of beef every day. Moving this much beef requires sophisticated



ENABLES CLOUD STRATEGY



100% NETWORK UPTIME



30 MONTH ROI

logistics and a reliable network to connect AFG's 4,500 employees with the applications and services needed to manage sales, production, and distribution.

While everything starts with hooves on the ground, the technology infrastructure running this 21st century agri-business is up in the cloud. American Foods Group has fully embraced a cloud-first strategy and is methodically moving core applications into Microsoft Azure from its traditional data center. However, the move to cloud exposed limitations in the corporate WAN.



In the past we were constantly in reactive mode and never had time to get ahead of the curve. Today, with a modern network built on the EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform, it's a night-and-day difference for the company."

— Scott Meisenhelder, Network Engineer,
American Foods Group

Scott Meisenhelder, the lead network engineer at American Foods Group, explains, "We used low-bandwidth MPLS as our primary circuit for business traffic with DIA or DSL, depending on the site, for internet-bound traffic and as backup. When the company decided to move into Azure, we knew our network would not support it. The pipes needed would be astronomical in cost. So, we had to come up with a better solution."

Choosing an SD-WAN vendor leads straight to Silver Peak

AFG works with [Sirius Computer Solutions](#), which hosts a portion of the company's IT infrastructure, and asked them about SD-WAN. As a Silver Peak partner, Sirius recommended the [Unity EdgeConnect™](#) SD-WAN edge platform, and collaborated with AFG's IT team to test the solution.

"With the recommendation from Sirius, and after seeing what EdgeConnect could do during our evaluation, we did not look at any other vendors," Meisenhelder says.

High on the list of solution requirements was the ability to support redundant configurations for high availability. Meisenhelder also points out that the ability to use business intent overlays to prioritize traffic based on business need was another key factor in their decision. "We liked the ability to organize our applications according to what's critical, like our Sage accounting software, and bulk workloads such as backups. We have a lot of backup traffic on our network and being able to classify that so it doesn't slow down any other business activity is important to us."



Rapid deployment key to supporting work-from-home model

Today, AFG has the EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform deployed at all of its 25 locations, including two EdgeConnect appliances in Microsoft Azure. All production facilities are configured with dual-active appliances to ensure high availability, and in every location EdgeConnect is terminated with dual bonded circuits—MPLS and either DIA or DSL broadband.

EdgeConnect is also service chained with Palo Alto Networks firewalls at the edge, in the data center, and in the cloud. The IT team centrally manages the SD-WAN using the [Unity Orchestrator™](#) management interface.

The SD-WAN rollout was completed by Meisenhelder and his team in under two months, including the Azure deployments, which proved timely when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. With the EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform working in concert with Palo Alto Networks secure, cloud-based VPN, AFG was able to easily shift to a work-from-home model and continue its operations without disruption.

AFG also retired its legacy branch routers, relying instead on the unified routing interoperability in EdgeConnect, consolidating the edge for greater efficiency and lower costs over time. Using Orchestrator centralized management software, Meisenhelder will also be closely monitoring traffic flows and performance in anticipation of eventually moving away from MPLS to all broadband.

Rob Harrison, infrastructure director with American Foods Group, remarks, “One of our objectives was to reduce our infrastructure footprint at the edge by retiring our legacy routers and consolidating on the EdgeConnect platform. With this, and by decommissioning MPLS, we’re projecting cost savings of \$10,000 per month with an ROI of 30 months.

IT transformation with SD-WAN makes night-and-day difference

With an SD-WAN built on the EdgeConnect platform, AFG now has robust, cost-efficient network connectivity to support its cloud-first strategy. Branches are able to break out locally to Azure, and by leveraging capabilities such as [path conditioning](#),

quality of service, and [dynamic path control](#), are assured of high-performance access to the business applications running in Azure and the entire Microsoft Office 365 suite.

In addition, American Foods has experienced no network downtime due to circuit brownouts or outages since deploying the EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform. That’s because of its high-availability configurations at all critical sites, and sub-millisecond failover between dual links across the SD-WAN.

Meisenhelder notes, “It gives me peace of mind knowing if we have a circuit outage, or even if an appliance goes down, the business will keep running. That used to be a big concern. If the internet link went down in the past, it was a mad scramble to reroute traffic so people could get to the necessary vendor websites. But now that’s not an issue.”

As the company continues to grow through mergers and acquisitions, Meisenhelder also sees another advantage of the SD-WAN. “To stand up a new site is easy with EdgeConnect; I can practically do it in my sleep now. We just plug in a couple cables, push out the configuration profile from Orchestrator, and they’re on our network.”

Implementation of the SD-WAN is the capstone to a multiyear IT transformation at American Foods Group that included a comprehensive infrastructure refresh, as well as the move to cloud and rearchitecting the network. Meisenhelder concludes, “In the past we were constantly in reactive mode and never had time to get ahead of the curve. Today, with a modern network built on the EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform, it’s a night-and-day difference for the company.”

For more information on Silver Peak and our solutions, please visit: silver-peak.com



Customer

American Foods Group is the fifth largest beef processing company in the U.S., privately held and family run for more than 70 years. American Foods Group employs more than 4,500 people across the country who help bring fresh, frozen, and fully prepared beef products to retail markets, schools, and foodservice providers. American Foods Group is owned by Rosen's Diversified Inc., a vertically integrated company that also includes a fleet of over 500 trailer trucks and an exporting business taking its brands to over 40 countries.

Challenge

American Foods Group adopted a cloud-first strategy, but its traditional network comprised of low-bandwidth MPLS circuits and internet backup would not support the traffic demands of its 4,500 employees accessing applications in the cloud. The company needed a solution that enabled AFG to use its existing circuits but improve application performance and cost efficiency for running the business in Microsoft Azure.

Solution

Based on the recommendation of Silver Peak partner, Sirius Computer Solutions, American Foods Group tested the Silver Peak Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN edge platform and selected the solution to build its SD-WAN. The EdgeConnect platform is now deployed at all of AFG's 25 locations, including two EdgeConnect appliances in the Azure cloud.

All production facilities are configured with dual-active appliances to ensure high availability, and in every location EdgeConnect is terminated with dual bonded circuits comprised of MPLS and either DIA or DSL broadband. EdgeConnect is also service chained with Palo Alto Networks firewalls at the edge, in the data center, and in the cloud. The IT team centrally manages the SD-WAN using Unity Orchestrator.

Results

- Optimizes performance and reliability to support company's cloud-first strategy
- Enables local breakout at branches for direct access to Azure and Microsoft Office 365
- Facilitates rapid adoption of work-from-home model during a global pandemic
- Consolidates the edge, retiring legacy branch routers and instead using routing interoperability built into EdgeConnect
- Lowers costs with projected cost savings of \$10,000 per month with an ROI of 30 months from consolidation and reduced dependence on MPLS
- Assures network uptime for business, eliminating downtime due to brownouts or outages on any one circuit
- Accelerates bringing new locations online from weeks to days



Company Address

Silver Peak Systems, Inc
2860 De La Cruz Blvd.
Santa Clara, CA 95050



Phone & Fax

Phone: +1 888 598 7325
Local: +1 408 935 1800



Online

Email: info@silver-peak.com
Website: www.silver-peak.com

© 2020 Silver Peak Systems, Inc. All rights reserved. Silver Peak, the Silver Peak logo, and all Silver Peak product names, logos, and brands are trademarks or registered trademarks of Silver Peak Systems, Inc. in the United States and/or other countries. All other product names, logos, and brands are property of their respective owners.

SP-ECS-AMERICAN-FOODS-GROUP-081920