

The Organization

Palm Beach Tan, Inc.
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The Challenge

Streamline the configuration of point-of-sale (POS) and reporting software on remote franchise computers.

The SonicWALL Solution

Palm Beach Tan deployed the SonicWALL Virtual Assist remote support module on its existing SonicWALL SSL-VPN 2000 appliance, enabling its technicians to securely assume control of remote franchise computers via the Web.

The Results

- Reduces time spent on remote deployment of franchise computers by 50%.
- Removes technical burden from remote end user.
- Leverages existing infrastructure, policy and directories.
- Speeds operational readiness of new franchise locations.
- Provides greater control for IT.
- Eliminates need for manually installing or configuring fat clients at remote endpoints.

SonicWALL® Virtual Assist Speeds Palm Beach Tan POS Deployment

Palm Beach Tan, Inc. operates a leading national chain of over 150 retail tanning salons, with roughly half of those franchised. The company uses a proprietary POS system tailored to the indoor tanning industry. Each time a new franchisee converts to Palm Beach Tan, the company's IT team needs to remotely configure that franchisee's computers with front-end point-of-sale (POS) and reporting system software. Palm Beach Tan chose to streamline the deployment of these remote POS endpoints—while leveraging their infrastructure investment—by implementing SonicWALL Virtual Assist remote support over their existing SonicWALL SSL-VPN 2000 solution.

The Challenge: Simplifying Remote Deployment of Retail POS and Reporting

"Our IT department is a full-service provider," says Ben Gray, IT Director. "When a franchisee comes on board, there's a lot of software we have to install." The back-end SunLync POS system database servers are hosted at a Dallas-based collocation facility. "The front-end is written in Delphi," says Gray. "The back-end is MySQL databases running on Windows Servers." To even out peak traffic spikes, each server is allocated to a time-zone demographic. The servers are accessed over load-balanced 100 MB connection, which is firewalled using two SonicWALL PRO 4060 network security appliances configured in high availability mode to deliver automatic failover. "The availability of that connection is crucial to our business," says Gray.

Gray has deployed a SonicWALL SSL-VPN 2000 to provide franchisees and corporate employees with easy-to-use remote access to corporate network resources, with the security of 256-bit AES SSL encryption. Each retail location has two or three computers running the POS front end, each connecting to the database over high-speed cable, DSL, or dedicated T1. To firewall these retail environments, Gray has implemented SonicWALL TZ 170 and 180 network security appliances. "I have no problem deploying SonicWALL both on the enterprise level and at the store level," says Gray. "Every store has a SonicWALL in it."

Previously, setting up new franchise computers involved making lengthy long distance calls, sending file attachments, and hand-holding remote end users of various technical skill levels through the installation. "Anyone who has tried to set up a remote POS over the phone knows how frustrating that can be," says Gray. Gray tried implementing Microsoft® Remote Assistant, but his team found that solution frustrating as well. "Sometimes it just wouldn't work. It did not meet the demands of our corporate environment."

The Solution: SonicWALL SSL-VPN 2000 with Virtual Assist

When SonicWALL introduced the optional Virtual Assist remote support module for SonicWALL SSL-VPN 2000 and SonicWALL SSL-VPN 4000 appliances, Gray immediately recognized an opportunity to resolve his remote support issues by leveraging his existing remote access architecture.

Palm Beach Tan

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—Ben Gray
IT Director
Palm Beach Tan

SonicWALL Benefits

- Enhanced customer satisfaction
- Increased support levels
- Improved technical and workforce productivity
- Faster business growth
- Reduced overall cost of solution ownership
- Greater return on technology investment

SonicWALL Virtual Assist enables an authorized support technician to securely assume control of a remote user's PC or laptop via a Web browser, as well as provide real-time chat and file transfer capabilities. The technician can e-mail a link to the end user to initiate a session, or the end user can request assistance by logging into the Virtual Assist portal.

The Result: Faster Growth and Greater Satisfaction at a Lower Cost

"Virtual Assist made setting up a remote POS a simple process," says Gray. "We've cut support call times in half. It was easy to set up, and only took about 15 minutes for my technicians to learn. Now, when a new franchisee requests a machine set-up, IT sends them an e-mail with a link to the Virtual Assist portal. They just click the link, and then we take over the machine. It gets us off the phone, let's us do our job. The file download feature is very useful."

Virtual Assist not only gets Palm Beach Tan franchisees into operation faster, but enhances customer service levels as well. "The new franchisee can watch what we're doing and can even end the session if they'd like," says Gray. "After we're done with configuration, we can step them through the system on-screen."

By leveraging his existing SSL VPN solution, Gray has also lowered total cost of ownership, and received a greater return on his technology investment. SonicWALL Virtual Assist is launched automatically at the user's browser via Java, eliminating the costs of manually installing and configuring "fat clients" at the remote endpoint. SonicWALL Virtual Assist can be instantly deployed company-wide using the SSL VPN administrative interface to integrate existing granular policy and authentication architecture.

The Future: A Time Saver for Ongoing Growth

Besides setup of the POS systems, Gray's team also uses Virtual Assist to configure ODBC connections on the franchise computer for internal reporting. Gray's staff of five technicians currently shares a single concurrent license for SonicWALL Virtual Assist. "As we grow larger, and we're continuing to grow, I can see us adding another license in the not too distant future."

"The SonicWALL SSL VPN is a great device. We're just maximizing our investment," says Gray. "Virtual Assist has made things much easier for us. It's a time saver, bottom line."

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