

Genuine Parts Company Partners with Forcepoint to Safeguard Web Traffic for 6,000 Retail Stores

Forcepoint Web Security Cloud provides flexible, centralized web traffic security for retailers who rely on GPC for quality parts and stellar service.

With 80% of its retail stores in the U.S. independently owned and operated, automotive parts supplier Genuine Parts Company needed to better manage and protect store internet traffic, without having complete control over store policies and web surfing. During a real-world proof of concept, the company found that Forcepoint worked to understand its business and was by its side every step of the way with a flexible, cloud-based solution that checked all the boxes.

CUSTOMER PROFILE:

Distributor of automotive replacement parts, including the NAPA brand. More than 2,600 operations around the world with approximately 48,000 employees.

INDUSTRY:

Retail

HQ COUNTRY:

United States

PRODUCT:

Forcepoint Web Security Cloud

In an era when online shopping seems to be taking over, some industries are still built on the personal touch. Founded in 1925, Genuine Parts Company (GPC) has provided automotive replacement parts to its retailer network for almost 100 years. In North America, that network consists of 6,000 stores in neighborhoods across the U.S. Twenty percent of those stores are owned by Genuine Parts, but about 80% are partner stores – independent retailers of Genuine Parts featuring the company’s retail brand name: NAPA auto parts. Not only do the products have a reputation for the highest quality, but customer service provided by local stores is paramount.

“For us, our end customers are auto repair shops or fleet managers that buy their parts from our stores. For example, Bob’s Garage could call up a store and say, ‘I need this part. Can you get it to me today?’ And, the store will put it on a truck and have it delivered in a couple of hours,” explained Damian Apone, Global Retail Director of Cybersecurity and Global Security Program Director, GPC. “If customers need a part and need it now, that’s where our retailers shine.”

Unlike franchisees, these retailers are truly independent and are committed to Genuine Parts as Genuine Parts is to them. In other words, the service GPC provides them is as critical as the service the stores provide to their own customers. These partner retailers rely on Genuine Parts for everything from the highest quality parts, to point of sale systems that make ordering easier, to, in some cases, cybersecurity protection that keeps their network and systems secure.

“They definitely appreciate the fact that we’re looking out for them, because we’re really the only ones doing that. They could buy from any supplier they want, but we’re the only ones bearing some of that burden for them,” Apone said.

Searching for a partner that understands GPC’s business and a solution that meets GPC’s unique requirements

Along with that burden comes the responsibility to ensure that GPC is providing those services in the most efficient, effective, and

safe manner. Each store has a connection directly into the GPC corporate network in order to place orders. General internet traffic in the stores is routed through the corporate network as well. Over the years, GPC realized that this approach caused three significant challenges:

- 1. Bandwidth.** In most cases, retailers are utilizing consumer or SMB-grade internet connectivity from local ISPs. Without a high-speed, dedicated connection from stores to the datacenter, even normal web surfing multiplied by thousands of retailers would cause traffic jams.
- 2. Lack of control.** For the 80% of stores that are independently owned and operated, GPC does not have the authority to control internet usage. By combining internet traffic from thousands of retailers with its corporate internet presence, GPC faced liability and blowback in terms of IP blocking and blacklisting of company’s corporate websites.
- 3. Elevated cybersecurity risk.** While the company already had the ability to block websites based on reputation and categories, that didn’t prevent users downloading files from unknown malicious sites, didn’t decrypt traffic, didn’t inspect it for threats, and didn’t protect the corporate network from these risky activities by retailers.

In order to address these challenges, the company identified the security and infrastructure teams’ key requirements. First, any solution needed to securely inspect traffic, while preserving bandwidth and throughput. Second, it needed to be agentless because the company would not be able to place the solution on independent retailer endpoints. Third, it had to be easy to centrally manage by the GPC corporate team, and finally, it needed to support the business as it existed.

“It was really key that this solution meet our current needs. There was an alternate vendor that argued, ‘If you were following best practices, our solution would be perfect.’ The reality is that changing the way that we do business was not reasonable. So, we needed to make sure that the solution we selected met our current business needs,” explained Apone.



Challenges

Safeguard internet traffic from retail locations, including independent retailers, to ensure security and reputation of corporate network.

Flexibility to handle 50 stores going off and coming onto the network monthly.

Better manage traffic to eliminate any bandwidth issues.



Approach

Implement Forcepoint Web Security Cloud for 6,000 retail locations across the U.S.

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DAMIAN APONE, GLOBAL RETAIL DIRECTOR OF CYBERSECURITY AND GLOBAL SECURITY PROGRAM DIRECTOR, GPC

Real-world proof-of-concept testing leads to late nights and a real partnership

After an RFP process, GPC identified a handful of potential contenders, including Forcepoint cloud-based Web Security. The auto parts supplier decided to put them all to a real-world proof-of-concept (POC) test.

“The first vendor very rapidly demonstrated that although they said they could do things on paper, they didn’t understand our business, and their solution was not going to work,” Apone said. “Forcepoint took the time to get to know us and to understand our business. And they were honest about what they could and couldn’t do.”

GPC moved forward with the installation of Forcepoint Web Security and one other vendor’s product at 20 stores across the US, running the POC for six months. The company evaluated criteria including ease of set up, policy creation and rollout, deployment in the field, store conversion, traffic visibility, reporting, and cost-effectiveness. Ease of store conversion was especially critical, as 50 GPC stores come onto and leave the network monthly. The company couldn’t be locked into an inflexible solution.

“Forcepoint stepped up to be a partner.”

DAMIAN APONE, GLOBAL RETAIL DIRECTOR OF CYBERSECURITY AND GLOBAL SECURITY PROGRAM DIRECTOR, GPC

“We found Forcepoint checked all of the boxes for us,” Apone said. In addition to meeting the company’s requirements, Forcepoint’s commitment to service was highly visible during the POC.

“As we were converting stores in the middle of the night, the Forcepoint team was there with us to make sure that everything was behaving as intended,” Apone said. “They were very responsive.”

“I can’t emphasize enough how crucial vendor support was to our decision,” he continued. “And it’s not just the customer care team. It was top to bottom from sales exec to sales engineer, presales engineer to the partnership with ICM Cyber, the VAR that supported the implementation. All along the way, they took the time to understand our business and were there to support us even after the decision to purchase had been made. Forcepoint and ICM bent over backwards to make us happy.”

Improving business performance while improving the security of the business

Since the implementation, GPC is very satisfied with the results. “Before rolling out Forcepoint Web Security, it seemed like we were getting calls about endpoint infections left and right, but that doesn’t seem to be the case now. Probably because we don’t have the gaping holes we did before, we don’t have as many infections from people downloading bad content. That’s being blocked more effectively,” Apone said.

During the POC, GPC also heard favorable feedback from its more rural retailers with slower internet connection speeds. Once the solution was in place for them, the company was able to free up bandwidth to provide better response times.

Forcepoint Web Security also allowed GPC to deploy other “noisy” applications without increasing its need for bandwidth. “It’s a savings because if we hadn’t found a way through Forcepoint to better manage the existing traffic, we definitely would have had to buy bigger pipes. And we haven’t had to do that,” Apone said.

“With Forcepoint, we were able to help improve business performance while improving the overall security of our business. I deal with vendors every single day. I don’t need vendors. I need partners. I need partners to help us solve our strategic problems and challenges. And Forcepoint stepped up to be a partner.”



Results

- › **Reduction in calls** to address endpoint infections at retail locations.
- › **Ability to add new traffic-heavy applications** without the need to increase bandwidth.
- › **Improved business performance** while improving the overall security of the business.
- › **Long-term trust and partnership** developed between Forcepoint and Genuine Parts.

