



Forcepoint Cybersecurity Helps Germany's HBPO Lead the Auto Parts Industry from the Front

Parts supplier to the world's most famous automakers relies on Forcepoint and partner Blue Technologies to keep assembly lines moving and secure.

HBPO provides the world's most recognizable cars with a stylish face. The company designs, assembles, and delivers complete front-end modules (FEMs)—fully integrated with key components from iconic emblems to sleek headlamps—directly to automaker assembly lines. With a culture of innovation and need to operate near its global clients to meet their “just-in-sequence” production requirements, the company decided to update network security to better provision and protect dozens of branch facilities. HBPO trusted Forcepoint and service provider Blue Technologies to roll out a scalable, flexible NGFW and SD-WAN security solution that helps the company keep pace with its fast-moving customers.

CUSTOMER PROFILE:

Lippstadt, Germany-based manufacturer is the world's leading supplier of modular vehicle fronts for automakers like Audi, BMW, Hyundai, and Porsche.

INDUSTRY:

Automotive

HQ COUNTRY:

Germany

PRODUCTS:

- › Forcepoint NGFW
- › Forcepoint SD-WAN

Every year, one in three automobiles (or 30 million) are manufactured worldwide with a modular vehicle front known as a front-end module (FEM). Every sixth FEM produced, about 6 million modules, comes from an HBPO plant. Founded in 1999, HBPO has more than 30 manufacturing facilities worldwide, including 5 in Germany, which produce FEMs, consoles, and other car parts. With a diverse customer base of automakers that produce small- to SUV-sized cars, each with specialized requirements—no module is identical—the company has to develop, design, assemble, and deliver up to 15,000 different FEM variants to its customers, just-in-sequence.

The demands of its automaker customers for efficiency and speed mean the company has to place operations nearby and be equally nimble. The fully customized FEMs often aren't ordered, built, or delivered until they are needed for the next assembly sequence for a particular car.

"Sometimes, we have only 45 minutes in some plants to produce a module in sequence," explained Marc Sohlich, system administrator and IT security officer at HBPO. "If an automaker is producing a red car, they will not order the red FEM until it's time to build it, so we have to be able to deliver the parts in sequence. Just-in-sequence is even more complex than just-in-time manufacturing."

Added Thomas Rech, HBPO senior systems administrator: "At the rate we're building modules, our local operations need a stable network that delivers data fast. Everything in our business is time sensitive, so we not only work with speed and precision, we also must be completely secure. Orders may come with specific processes that could take 100 steps or contain details like the amount of torque needed to install screws on the engine hood—all of that data needs to be protected."

With HBPO's business viability depending on the resiliency of its two dozen remote facilities, protecting and supporting the edge of the network is critical. When the legacy solution was nearing end of life, the company decided to look for network security options

to better provision and protect its manufacturing and service sites. The security team had to provide secure, fast connections to its global SAP ordering and delivery system, while simplifying and centralizing management. HBPO also wanted to discontinue paying high service fees for its existing MPLS links and implement more effective network security, without sacrificing connectivity or resiliency. To stay out front, HBPO required modern security that had extra gears.

NGFW and SD-WAN securely connects remote sites while keeping HBPO close to customers

Guided by Blue Technologies, a trusted managed service provider, HBPO conducted Proofs of Concept with Forcepoint Next Generation Firewall (NGFW) and firewalls from other vendors. Forcepoint proved to have the best solution for the manufacturer's needs. Forcepoint and Blue Technologies architected an NGFW-based network security solution to place paired, clustered Forcepoint NGFW appliances at 25 HBPO branches worldwide, or 50 total appliances.

"When we started looking at SD-WAN and NGFW solutions for all the plants, Blue Technologies recommended Forcepoint because of its better clustering and security technology. The support has been outstanding from Blue Technologies, and we really like the Forcepoint solution. Forcepoint just works better," said Sohlich.

Forcepoint SD-WAN security lowers costs, improves resiliency at branch locations

Migrating to SD-WAN enabled HBPO to add each site to the network faster and reduce costs significantly. HBPO believes that by switching to SD-WAN it can save a significant amount on connectivity costs per month. Forcepoint's SD-WAN allowed the team to use multiple connections from different ISPs, secure each of those links with Forcepoint's top-rated solution, provide protected VPN connections to HBPO headquarters, and manage the entire network from one Forcepoint console.



Challenges

- › Operate around the clock in close proximity to its customers across the world.
- › Utilize SD-WAN to make connecting branch offices to the network faster and less expensive.
- › Provide backup internet connections to avoid disruption to production of FEMs.
- › Provide secure VPN connections to HBPO headquarters.



Approach

Deploy Forcepoint NGFW and migrate from MPLS to cost-effective Forcepoint SD-WAN with local internet service providers.

The combination of Forcepoint NGFW and SD-WAN also provided an affordable business continuity solution. In the event of an issue, a site can failover to another ISP link.

"We now have a much more cost-effective, highly resilient infrastructure that gives us more control and flexibility for security. NGFW provides the visibility into network traffic we couldn't get with MPLS," explained Sohlich. "Our production plants really rely on Forcepoint to make everything work in sequence."

HBPO uses Forcepoint NGFW Security Management Center to securely adapt to rapid change

The power and simplicity of Forcepoint NGFW with SD-WAN has enabled HBPO to handle new customer and regulatory requirements on the fly. With the Forcepoint Security Management Center (SMC), HBPO can meet an OEM customer's audit requirements for ISO 27001 using the visibility provided by Forcepoint NGFW combined with SMC's reporting tools. The team can set custom security policies, rules, and controls tailored to each location, which also proved invaluable as the pandemic transformed business needs overnight.

"When COVID started, SMC allowed us to manage the transition to work-from-home seamlessly," said Sohlich. "SMC is intuitive. We were able to quickly set new policies that allowed access to all required resources and applications. It was a huge relief and not everyone in the industry could say that. We were really glad we had Forcepoint."

Besides shifting to support a remote workforce, the IT security team can also scale alongside its automaker customers. When an electric car manufacturer wanted to enter a new market by establishing another factory, it took just a couple of weeks to secure and connect the HBPO remote site to headquarters through Forcepoint NGFW with SD-WAN.

"Newer OEMs on the market are aggressive and are constantly pushing the needle," concluded Rech. "With Forcepoint as our partner, we can keep up. For some security products, configuration and policy management can be really complicated. Forcepoint's NGFW administration is more logical. It's very intuitive and easy to manage."

Security innovation and Forcepoint partnership let HBPO lead the industry leaders

Because of HBPO's history and culture of never resting on its laurels, the IT security team believes the company's enterprising spirit is a true competitive advantage.

"Our customers are global. They're forward-leaning and they're looking for partners who are technology-advanced in every direction," said Sohlich. "Five to six years ago, HBPO was an early adopter of cloud services for our plants. Back then, all the other manufacturers thought we were strange. Now, everyone is in the cloud."

Forcepoint's approach to converging security capabilities like zero-trust network access, threat protection, data protection, and behavioral analytics is helping HBPO thoughtfully build on its plan for growth.

"HBPO is always in front with our customers, and Forcepoint is the same," said Rech. "Some suppliers can't work outside of a standard bill-of-materials, but we're more flexible because of our use of technology innovation. We're leading in how we're implementing network security and shifting to SD-WAN. We need our business partners to be just as forward-looking, and Forcepoint is."



Results

- › Achieved quick, easy deployment of SD-WAN that exceeded the customer's expectations.
- › Saved on connectivity costs by migrating from MPLS to SD-WAN.
- › Quickly responded to customer compliance requirements, replicated configurations, and updated policies for remote devices with just a few mouse clicks.
- › Enabled remote workers with support built right into Forcepoint NGFW, which proved crucial to sustaining operations when pandemic lockdowns were initiated.

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MARC SOHLICH, SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR AND IT SECURITY OFFICER, HBPO