



CASE STUDY

# Insurance Provider Revolutionizes Network Security and Compliance



Privately held Warrior Invictus Holding Company, Inc. owns a half-dozen insurance companies and ancillary businesses, most serviced under the banner of Preferred Risk Insurance Services, Inc. The company manages \$100 million in annual premiums for nonstandard auto, property and casualty, and life and health insurance policies for customers in nine states. Its employees are spread across three sites with a headquarters near Chicago’s Midway Airport and locations in Kansas and Texas.

As a financial services company that manages a broad array of insurance products, Warrior Invictus and its independent distributor network face enterprise-level security risks. In early 2017, after two significant security incidents occurred over several months’ time, executive management recognized the need for a more formally structured IT program, an updated network infrastructure, and a more intentional focus on security as an integral part of that framework.

## Planting Seeds for Transformation

The company set out to hire its first-ever CIO to direct this transformation, selecting and giving the charge to Mark Las in September 2017. “I had four priorities that were actually written into my offer letter,” Las recalls. “First and most important was to bolster security to prevent any more incidents. Second was to ensure that the IT program is staffed with the right kind of talent. Third was to revamp the systems and applications strategy, and fourth was to create an overarching new IT strategy.”

Before Las was hired, Warrior Invictus engaged Rapid7 to conduct a thorough security assessment, and the report was presented to Las after he arrived. Rapid7 evaluated the company against National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) benchmarks and also assessed compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). “The report showed what we already knew—that we had a long way to go,” Las remembers. “But it gave us a really clear map of where we needed to be.”

## Putting Together a Plan

During his first 90 days, Las and his team went through a structured decision-making process about the company’s overall IT infrastructure. Fortinet Partner Fiber Solution Consulting, Inc. served as a trusted advisor throughout the process. Founder and President Ben Powell worked with Las in several previous roles, and the two have developed a close working relationship over the years. “We are able to skip past the sales conversation and just talk about how to solve problems,” Las reflects.

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– Mark Las, CIO, Warrior Invictus Holding Co., Inc.

### Details

**Customer:** Warrior Invictus Holding Co., Inc.

**Industry:** Insurance

**Location:** Bedford Park, Illinois

**Fortinet Partner:** Fiber Solution Consulting, Inc.

The situation that Las inherited was not optimal. “We ran a diverse mix of point solutions to address specific networking and security needs,” he says. “None of them talked to each other, and I am sure we didn’t have all of them fully turned on or properly configured. Our guys kept the system running, but something would break on a regular basis, creating downtime for the whole office. Then the ‘super heroes’ from the IT team would fly in, get it up and running again, and everyone was grateful. But it happened almost every day. We knew we had a lot of work on our plate.”

## Updating Network Infrastructure

The transformation started with basic infrastructure. “We wound up ripping and replacing all the cabling, routers, switches, and firewalls,” recalls Ron Maynard, Warrior Invictus’s director of IT operations, whom Las brought on board after working with him in prior roles. “We understood that being truly secure would require a stable network infrastructure.”

The reliability of electric power was another issue. “We are located in an area with a lot of heavy industry, and our power supply experiences occasional brownouts—especially in the summer,” Maynard notes. “As a result, we decided to move some of our critical services to an outsource provider to enhance stability. This enabled us to reduce the on-premises server footprint and consolidate our data center into a more optimal space.”

## Evaluating Network Security Solutions

After these basics were addressed, Las and his team turned to the task of building a comprehensive network security infrastructure. Las had seen a white paper about the Fortinet Security Fabric and asked Powell at Fiber Solution Consulting to do some research on the solution. At the same time, Powell also solicited bids from several of the major network security solution providers.

“My perspective is that the features and performance of the different hardware components have never been an issue regardless of the vendor. So, I looked more at how the overall solution is architected and how the components fit together,” Las explains. “The major networking and firewall providers have acquired point solutions for various security needs, but have not done well with integrating those solutions into the larger system.

“Fortinet is very different in that regard,” Las continues. “Every element of the Fortinet Security Fabric is fully integrated into the whole, and every part of the security architecture is visible through a single pane of glass. And we have a single vendor to deal with from an administrative perspective. These are incredibly powerful and cost-effective benefits for a business like ours.”

## Deploying Feature-rich NGFWs, Setting the Stage for SD-WAN

Working through Fiber Solution Consulting, Warrior Invictus placed an order for a comprehensive solution that includes nearly every element of the Fortinet Security Fabric. The team started by installing FortiGate next-generation firewalls (NGFWs) at the headquarters. The company is using the intrusion prevention, web filtering, anti-malware, and application control functionalities in its FortiGate NGFWs.

One unplanned but effective initiative was to activate the software-defined wide-area network (SD-WAN) technology that is built into the NGFWs. “We have SD-WAN deployed at headquarters and plan to turn it on at the remote sites once the FortiGate NGFWs are in place there,” Las reports. “I was not aware of this feature when we made the purchase, but learned about it in a Fortinet training session. Given that it improves network performance and saves the cost of new network bandwidth in the future—while ensuring security for all network traffic—it was a no-brainer to turn it on.”

## Business Impact

- \$500,000 annual cost avoidance for 4 cybersecurity headcount
- 40,000 staff hours reclaimed annually—equating to at least \$1.4 million—through elimination of previously frequent downtime at headquarters
- 150,000 provider network staff hours reclaimed annually through elimination of downtime
- Projected to save significant staff hours through automation of audit reports
- Greatly enhanced compliance posture for existing and emerging regulations and standards

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– Mark Las, CIO, Warrior Invictus Holding Co., Inc.

## Bolstering Security with Fabric Solutions

Once the NGFWs were in place, the team began deploying the different elements of the Fortinet Security Fabric to provide a broad, integrated, and automated network security architecture. FortiAuthenticator provides access management and single sign-on. FortiClient protects the company's endpoints. FortiMail provides mail security for Warrior Invictus's email system, which was migrated to Microsoft Office 365 as a part of the larger initiative. FortiSandbox enables sandbox analysis of network traffic to detect zero-day threats.

Warrior Invictus also deployed wireless connectivity at its headquarters using FortiAP wireless access points and FortiSwitch switches. "We were using consumer-grade Wi-Fi previously, which wasn't secure and for which we had no visibility," Maynard contends. "On top of that, we had some rogue access points that made the security gap even bigger. We truly went from being totally blind to what was going on to having complete control."

When Warrior Invictus deployed 20 wireless access points in its four-story headquarters, employees immediately noticed a very strong signal. "We actually had to turn it down a bit, as it initially went out as far as Midway Airport," Maynard quips. The team used the FortiManager VM management tool to provision the solution and for ongoing management.

All of these solutions are seamlessly integrated via connectors as part of the Fortinet Security Fabric, with centralized visibility and management via the FortiManager console. And all of the Fortinet Security Fabric solutions feature comprehensive threat intelligence from FortiGuard Labs—including the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to detect unknown threats with FortiGuard AI.

## Gaining Added Value Through Services

Fiber Solution Consulting architected the Fortinet Security Fabric solution and provided professional services to help with deployment, while Las's team contributed time toward the rollout as well. The Fortinet Network Security Academy team also provided input and recommendations. "They were engaged and available to help from the beginning to the end of the project, and the training was really good," Powell asserts. Maynard agrees: "I can't say enough about how their help enhanced our success."

After deployment is complete, some of the company's cybersecurity employees are also interested in continuing training with the Network Security Academy toward Fortinet's eight-level Network Security Expert (NSE) certification. "Having employees with that level of expertise will be a value add for us," Las says. Fortinet's technical support has also been a positive for Warrior Invictus. "We signed up for five years of FortiCare 360, and I think that investment has already paid for itself," Maynard contends. FortiCare 360 provides 24x7x365 support with specific service-level agreements.

## Realizing Huge Efficiency and Productivity Gains

Warrior Invictus has seen a number of tangible benefits from consolidating network security under the Fortinet Security Fabric. The efficiency of transparent visibility and centralized monitoring from a single pane of glass makes a real difference. "The Rapid7 assessment recommended that we hire six to eight new headcount to help manage the security program," Las notes. "Conservatively, the salaries of these professionals would have to be at least \$100,000, plus 30% for benefits. This plus ancillary costs easily make this a \$1 million-plus investment. We did add a couple of cybersecurity positions because we were so understaffed before, but standardizing on the Fortinet Security Fabric eliminated much of that staffing need and saved us at least \$500,000 per year."

The overall project, including the security initiative, resulted in almost complete elimination of downtime, something that had happened on almost a daily basis before. "For the 265 employees at headquarters, assuming they previously experienced three hours a week of downtime—which is honestly conservative—we have gained back 40,000 staff hours of productivity per year," Las estimates. "At an average employee cost of \$35 per hour, we're gaining \$1.4 million in business value."

The benefits from the elimination of downtime extend out to the independent agents who sell policies for Warrior Invictus's companies. "Let's say each of our 3,000 agents had to deal with an hour a week of downtime," Las describes. "Again, that is probably conservative. That results in 150,000 hours of regained productivity in the provider network. And with independent agents that represent many companies, some will simply book a policy with another company out of frustration if they're unable to connect with us."

## Solutions

- FortiGate
- FortiGuard Threat Intelligence
- FortiAuthenticator
- FortiAP
- FortiClient
- FortiMail Cloud
- FortiManager VM
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiSandbox
- FortiSwitch
- FortiCare 360

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## Delivering Better Compliance and Broader Trust

An integrated and automated security solution promises to make compliance more complete and less labor-intensive. “Once you’re NIST compliant, which I can now say we are, you’re 95% of the way there with just about any other regulation or standard,” Las continues. “Since we offer life and health insurance, HIPAA is front and center for us. We’re not currently subject to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) standards, but these are starting to be legislated on a state-by-state basis. The good news is that NIST gives us the foundation to comply with whatever comes along.” Reporting compliance to regulators and auditors will become much less labor-intensive as well. “I know our next audit will be much easier,” Las predicts. “Before, we were using screenshots and manual entries into spreadsheets to satisfy auditors. Once everything is fully deployed, I will be able to hand an automated report to the auditor when he or she walks in, and that will answer all the questions.”

## Following Through with Transformation

Over the next several months, Las and his team will complete Warrior Invictus’s networking and security transformation and fully integrate the branch offices into the system. This will help the company to dramatically improve its risk posture over what it was just a year ago. “The project is coming together very nicely, and I am very happy with my team as it stands now,” Las reflects. “Thanks to Fortinet and Fiber Solution Consulting, we are protecting the information of thousands of policyholders utilizing next-generation technology, and our employees are happier and more productive.”



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