

Why H.B. Fuller Chose Cisco Secure Access: Elevating Cybersecurity and Enhancing Performance for a Global Workforce

H.B. Fuller, a global leader in industrial adhesives, sealants, and specialty chemicals with more than 7,000 employees and sales in more than 140 countries, has been recognized as a remote-friendly workplace, but that doesn't come without its challenges. Like many global organizations, they ramped up their move to remote work during the onset of the pandemic and faced the challenge of protecting digital assets while ensuring seamless access for a global workforce.

Derek Shaw, Global Vice President, CIO at H.B. Fuller, described how this change was such a dramatic shift from his early career days working on-site at organizations and managing corporate networks. "Now I really have to protect everything and treat the internet as my corporate network. I have to think about all these different connection points, all these different locations that people are working from."

But Shaw is no stranger to challenges.

He's seen the worst play out more than once in his more than two decades working in IT at a variety of different companies, and his commitment to avoiding major business disruption and outages drives his security priorities at H.B. Fuller. Prior to joining H.B. Fuller, Shaw resolved incidents that resulted in "complete 100% shutdown of the company. No email, no phone, no access to ERP, no access to file shares, no access to any internal applications, no access to the internet, just a 100% complete shutdown of a company for 2-3 days."

H.B. Fuller is working with Cisco to centralize its cybersecurity approach and adopt a cloud-based solution to address the challenges of a distributed, evolving, and increasingly interconnected digital landscape.



H.B. Fuller

Industry:

Industrial adhesives

Location:

St. Paul, Minnesota

Organization:

7,000+ employees,
120 locations globally

Solution:

Cisco Secure Access

Scaling security for a global workforce

As H.B. Fuller embraced SaaS applications to support its hybrid and remote workforce, the company encountered several cybersecurity challenges:

- **VPN capacity:** The pandemic-induced remote work surge tested the limitations of H.B. Fuller's VPN infrastructure, necessitating a scalable, cloud-based solution.
- **Granular access control:** Granular access control: The need for nuanced access controls became apparent, as traditional VPNs could only grant overly broad access.
- **Integration overhead:** Managing a multitude of security tools led to significant integration and administrative challenges.

A strategic shift to centralized cybersecurity

To address these challenges, H.B. Fuller took decisive steps to strengthen and centralize its cybersecurity approach. The company implemented Cisco Secure Access with the following goals:

- **Robust cybersecurity controls:** Strengthening defenses against threats and ensuring secure (least-privilege) access to company resources.
- **Seamless integration:** Facilitating the swift incorporation of new acquisitions into H.B. Fuller's security ecosystem.
- **User experience enhancement:** Providing employees with frictionless access to the full set of public and private applications.
- **Data loss prevention:** Implementing measures to prevent unauthorized access and potential data breaches.



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– Derek Shaw
Global Vice President, CIO, H.B. Fuller

Secure web access as a cornerstone

A key milestone for H.B. Fuller was the deployment of secure web access for a mission-critical in-house application. This move significantly improved performance and user experience, marking a departure from the traditional VPN approach.

“The shift to Cisco Secure Access has been pivotal for our global team,” says Shaw. “The positive feedback from our employees underscores the enhanced performance and user-friendliness of the new system.”

He believes that security leaders need to do, “as much as we can do to make cybersecurity easy for people ... [we’re] trying to make security seamless and remove friction from their day-to-day activities. Always protected, always connected, whatever they need to do.” Cisco Secure Access helped make this possible.

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Streamlined operations and elevated performance

Cisco Secure Access has delivered more than just a better user experience. It’s helped drive successes from all over the business, from sales to security.

- **Mobile quoting capability:** Rolling out Secure Access gave employees the ability to generate quotes on-the-go from mobile devices, enhancing productivity and ultimately helping to drive revenue and higher customer satisfaction for the business.
- **Simplified IT management:** Secure Access has also turned IT admins into fans. “I would say also from an IT perspective, the administration of the platform is a significant improvement over what they traditionally were doing. So, my team’s very excited about what they see,” Shaw says.

Measuring success: Access management and threat mitigation

H.B. Fuller’s commitment to providing the appropriate, least privilege access and minimizing threats has been crucial to its security overhaul. Since the company’s

distributed workforce includes far more than just remote employees, it needed visibility and protection across the full spectrum of user types. This required a centralized approach that is more convenient for all user groups, better for the IT team and more secure for everyone.

“We have third-party vendors, suppliers, agencies, and other contract workers. And at times, we need to give them access to specific parts of our application landscape. Many times they just need access to one application versus the traditional VPN access to an entire network or segment. So granular access control for third-party accounts was absolutely something we saw as an advantage. We can have them come through a cloud portal and get to a single system,” Shaw says.

In addition to security successes, they’ve seen significant improvements in other areas, like increased performance: Because H.B. Fuller has started using Secure Access for replacing traditional VPNs, they’ve seen a significant increase in speed and performance across internet usage and app access.

A transformative cybersecurity journey

H.B. Fuller’s cybersecurity transformation has helped set the company up for future success as digital advancements continue to influence the way work is done. The company’s proactive approach to centralizing cybersecurity functions and adopting secure access solutions has not only addressed the immediate challenges but also laid the groundwork for future advancements.

“Our journey has reshaped our operational approach and strengthened our security posture,” says Shaw. “We are not just adapting to the digital age; we are leading the way.”