



MSP wins customers by offering Firewall as a Service

Hi-Tech Computers of Ruston, Inc., is winning new customers every month to its Firewall as a Service (FWaaS) offering featuring Dell SonicWALL firewalls and management software



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Richard Raue, President, Hi-Tech Computers of Ruston, Inc.

Customer profile



Company	Hi-Tech Computers of Ruston, Inc.
Industry	Information Technology
Country	United States
Website	www.hitechruston.com

Business need

Firewalls were often a hard sell for Hi-Tech Computers. Getting approval for large capital expenditures can be challenging for customers, and they worry about their firewalls quickly becoming outdated.

Solution

By offering Firewall as a Service, Hi-Tech Computers enables its customers to always have a current firewall with no capital expenditure. And Dell SonicWALL firewalls and management software deliver the features and flexibility customers need.

Benefits

- Enables customers to always have a current firewall with no capital expenditure
- Ensures enterprise-level security with flexible content filtering
- Enables MSPs to centrally manage all Dell firewalls offered as a service
- Improves the customer relationship and enhances customer loyalty

Solutions at a glance

- Firewall as a Service

Founded in 1997 to provide the Ruston, Louisiana area with quality PC repair and sales, Hi-Tech Computers quickly evolved to become a respected managed service provider (MSP). The company offers a wide range of IT services, from network design and implementation to remote monitoring and support. After having standardized on Dell next-generation firewalls for their quality and ease of use, Hi-Tech Computers jumped at the opportunity to offer Firewall as a Service (FWaaS) using Dell firewalls and firewall management software.

FWaaS puts world-class firewalls into the reach of any organization

Hi-Tech Computers standardized on Dell firewalls years ago based on their quality, ease of use and cost-effectiveness.

"We prefer the Dell firewalls to any others on the market," notes Richard Raue, president, Hi-Tech Computers of Ruston, Inc. "They are very easy to use, unlike the Cisco interfaces, for example, which can be difficult to work with. We especially like the consistency from the lowest model all the way to the highest model — our technicians can learn to install a small firewall and then already know what to do on the largest ones."

When Hi-Tech Computers learned of the opportunity to offer Firewall as a Service (FWaaS) using Dell SonicWALL solutions, they immediately recognized that the offering would be popular with customers. "It can be hard to sell a top-quality firewall. Companies recognize the need for security but often they do not have the budget for that capital expenditure, and they don't want to pay the annual renewal fees," explains Raue. "When we saw the Firewall as a Service program, we wanted to be the first to sign up. With FWaaS, we can provide the security customers need for a fixed monthly fee, which is an operational expenditure. It's like your electricity bill — it's easy to pay a few hundred dollars per month, but it's not so easy to buy a \$50,000 generator."

Specifically, with FWaaS, Hi-Tech Computers can offer customers a very low entry point with just a 12-month commitment, and enable them to trade up to larger, more sophisticated firewalls as their needs grow. "FWaaS is an easy sell because it allows the customer to always have a current firewall with no capital expenditure," says Raue. "We can start them off with a smaller firewall than we normally would, knowing that if they grow out of it in a year, we can upgrade them to the next level. Even if that costs them \$12 or \$15 more per month, they're glad to pay it because by then they realize what the firewall has done for them. It's a much better customer relationship. Instead of nagging customers to spend hundreds of dollars for a renewal, we get to be the good guys offering to upgrade them to the newest and best security."

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Products & Services

Hardware

Dell SonicWALL NSA Series firewalls.

Software

Dell SonicWALL Comprehensive Gateway Security Suite

Dell SonicWALL Global Management System (GMS)



Extra features the competition can't match

For example, one of Hi-Tech Computers' FWaaS customers is a charter school, which of course needs content filtering to prevent students from accessing inappropriate or unsafe websites. "A \$15,000 firewall purchase simply wasn't in their budget, but they are happy to pay a couple hundred dollars a month for Firewall as a Service," says Raue. "We put in a pair of Dell SonicWALL NSA 3600s with failover, and it's doing a fantastic job of keeping the kids safe."

But the value of Dell firewalls goes far beyond content filtering. "The Dell firewalls provide extra features that are not available in other firewalls in the same price range," notes Raue. "For example, the charter school has remote classes, teleconferences and the like. With the Dell SonicWALL NSAs, we can prioritize bandwidth usage so they can utilize their 100 Mbps fiber connection to the fullest. Plus, the firewalls integrate with Active Directory to deliver single sign-on (SSO), so we can give each user specific access permissions, which is tremendously helpful — and not easily implemented with any of the competitors."

A win-win for MSP and customers alike

By offering Firewall as a Service, Hi-Tech Computers can deliver a strong value proposition to customers while building a sound business model for itself. "FWaaS often does not work out to be a savings versus a straight purchase," notes Raue. "But it saves the customer from having a huge capital expense every couple of years to have a current firewall. We give them convenience and the assurance that they constantly have the latest and greatest technology available. With all the high-profile breaches in the news, they want that security, and with the low monthly costs, more customers are opting for better firewalls with high availability (HA) than they would have chosen if they were buying outright."

And business is booming for Hi-Tech Computers. "We knew the Firewall as a Service program would be a huge benefit, so we jumped on it right away," reports Raue. "The adoption has been very positive — we have deployed 44 separate customers, and more than 90 percent of the firewalls that we put into the field are on the FWaaS program rather than straight sales."

Moreover, the FWaaS program helps Hi-Tech Computers build customer loyalty by offering another critical service. "FWaaS gives a managed service provider another hook into the customer — providing another service makes them less likely to just drop you when someone else offers similar services at a cheaper price," Raue explains. "If you're providing 10 different services and everything is working well, customers are not interested in the headache and risk of switching MSPs to save even a hundred dollars a month. Offering FWaaS helps us be the MSP providing the best value."

Easy remote management for the MSP

A major factor in the success of Hi-Tech Computers' FWaaS offering is the included Dell SonicWALL Global Management System (GMS), which enables effective remote management of customers' firewalls. "GMS is a huge benefit to us as a MSP because we can centrally manage all the firewalls without having to physically go onsite," says Raue. "That enables us to sell into companies even if we do not manage all their computers, and it makes updates easy even though we're managing dozens of firewalls. We can test updates and do a staged rollout."

The Dell SonicWALL Content Filtering Service (CFS) enables Hi-Tech Computers to efficiently block inappropriate content without constant manual updates. "Many of our customers need to block social media. But we couldn't go around to all the firewalls

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and type in lists of sites to block; we just wouldn't be able to keep up with it," explains Raue. "We have a subscription-based model — somebody else takes care of adding Yammer and Twitter and all those new ones that come out onto that list. We simply block the social media category, and we don't have to go back and touch our firewalls when a new social network comes out. And since every managed firewall comes with a free CFS license, the customer saves money while getting better security."

And with CFS, that security does not come at the expense of flexibility. "Customers can use CFS to unblock a certain website temporarily," Raue notes. "For example, a school might want to go to a certain YouTube channel during a particular lesson. With CFS, we can give them that control without compromising security for other parts of the network."

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The right solution from the right vendor

Hi-Tech Computers is confident in its decision to partner with Dell. "With Dell, I have to call only one sales rep instead of having to cobble together a solution from multiple vendors and then deal with the inevitable finger-pointing whenever one product doesn't work quite right with another," Raue says. "The Dell solutions work well together and are handled by the same support teams."

The Firewall as a Service offering is no exception, and Hi-Tech Computers is sticking with Dell. "We get solicited all the time by Cisco, but we ruled them out because their entry point for an equivalent device with content filtering is not in a price range our customers are willing to invest in. Similarly, Check Point keeps bugging us with claims that they are more secure," Raue says. "We just have not found any other firewall that has the functionality and support structure that Dell has."

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