

American Apparel Uses CradlePoint for High-Speed Backup, VPN Support, and Cloud-Based Router Management

SUMMARY

As one of the few apparel companies to do all of its manufacturing in the U.S., American Apparel has to use every angle to compete against foreign companies with far lower operating costs.

One of those angles is using CradlePoint MBR1200B and MBR1400LE-VZ Series Routers for wireless Internet backup. American Apparel has also found that these routers are capable of using IPsec protocol for VPN to securely connect with their Cisco devices. The protocol allows the company to create virtual private networks between its headquarters and all of its retail locations around the world.

“IPsec capability is important because we’re phasing out our Nortel Connectivity VPN and moving forward with Cisco,” says Osvaldo Hurtado, American Apparel’s Director of Store IT Infrastructure. “I also like the fact that the CradlePoint device is carrier agnostic and works with just about any carrier network available, giving our stores a wireless failover solution if they go offline. Carrier flexibility, plus IPsec and its capability to be a wireless controller is a great combination for us.”

COMPANY PROFILE

American Apparel is a vertically integrated manufacturer and retailer of clothing for men, women, children – and even dogs. All phases of production, from cutting and sewing to marketing and photography, are done at the company’s downtown Los Angeles factory. American Apparel has more than 280 stores located throughout the United States, Europe, China, Japan, Korea, Brazil, Mexico and Australia. Its Los Angeles factory is the largest sewing facility in North America.

Solution: CradlePoint MBR1200B and MBR1400LE-VZ Routers, Cloud-Enabled Management and Application Platform

Application: CradlePoint delivers backup Internet connectivity through wireless 3G/4G broadband, and peer-to-peer VPNs using IPsec protocol. CradlePoint cloud-enabled management and application platform enables efficient management of routers across multiple locations.

Market: Retail Apparel

BUSINESS NEEDS

The original impetus to work with CradlePoint, Hurtado says, grew from American Apparel’s need for a wireless failover system to guarantee uninterrupted Internet access. The locations’ need for PCI compliant Internet access to process credit card transactions, conduct time management tasks, provide email communications, and manage inventory control.



American Apparel then discovered that the CradlePoint MBR1200B and MBR1400LE-VZ Series Routers were able to use IPsec protocol to allow peer-to-peer VPN communication. Previously, American Apparel had relied on Nortel Networks for such communication. But when Nortel went out of business, American Apparel needed a way to reconstruct its VPNs.

For stores that have Cisco routers, American Apparel uses the Cisco 2800 series. But for stores that didn't, CradlePoint was chosen for its combination of IPsec protocol support, wireless backup solution, and cloud-based network management.

SOLUTION

CradlePoint routers enable American Apparel to keep hundreds of its international retail locations online through wireless 3G/4G broadband backup support. The stores can also use CradlePoint routers to create private networks to company headquarters.

To manage its network of routers, American Apparel uses CradlePoint's cloud-enabled management solution. This network management solution allows American Apparel to centrally deploy, configure, and manage all of their devices across different retail stores to improve the reliability and enhance the intelligence of their network.

BENEFITS

Instant Backup Solution

About 80% of American Apparel stores' operations rely on a stable and fast internet connection. If an Internet provider's physical line goes down, the store stands to lose functionality and sales – both of which put added stress on store employees and, more importantly, create a negative customer experience.

"If the Internet connection is down," Hurtado says, "our stores aren't able to perform many of their daily operations, putting them in a very frustrating position. With the CradlePoint and service from whatever carrier is dominant in the area, I can get the store up and operational within minutes."

Easily Configured

With CradlePoint cloud management, American Apparel has the ability to remotely manage its routers over the network. This solution enables IT departments to identify devices whether they are offline or online, configure and upgrade routers automatically, and enable configuration of individual or groups of routers – all from one unified dashboard.

"Many of our store employees are not technically savvy," Hurtado says. "By having the tools to manage our routers through the cloud, we don't require IT staff at every store location. We can do it from headquarters."

Floor Coverage

According to Hurtado, most American Apparel retail locations range from 1,400 to 1,500 square feet. With some wireless solutions, companies might have to buy additional equipment to extend the signal.

"A single CradlePoint router covers the entire store," Hurtado says. "We've saved money and time by not having to install two or three access points per store to get the coverage we need."

Flexibility

In one CradlePoint router, American Apparel gets wireless backup support, VPN connectivity, and WiFi capability. And all of this, he says, is available at a very competitive price, and with dependable customer support.

"CradlePoint is definitely a great solution," Hurtado says. "We tried to get the same functionality from somewhere else, and it proved to be expensive. Too expensive!"