

# Aaron's Inc. saves over \$1 million annually with SonicWall solutions

By connecting its 1,800 distributed retail sites over secure VPN, Aaron's minimized bandwidth costs, while gaining flexibility and granular security.



## Customer profile



|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Company</b>   | Aaron's, Inc.                                      |
| <b>Industry</b>  | Specialty Retail                                   |
| <b>Country</b>   | United States                                      |
| <b>Employees</b> | 10,000   |
| <b>Website</b>   | <a href="http://www.aarons.com">www.aarons.com</a> |

## Challenges

- Large distributed enterprise deployment
- Lack of traffic visibility
- Demand for flexible management

## Solution

- SonicWall E-Class NSA E6500 and E5500 HA pairs
- SonicWall NSA 2400 and 240 Series
- SonicWall TZ 210 Series
- SonicWall GMS

## Benefits

- Robust VPN solutions
- Next-Generation Firewall capabilities
- Application intelligence, control and visualization
- Responsive global management

"When we compared SonicWall feature-to-feature with competing solutions, SonicWall beat them hands down."

Jason Tate  
Director of Network Services

Aaron's® Inc. (NYSE: AAN) is the nation's leader in the sales and lease ownership and specialty retailing of residential and office furniture, consumer electronics, home appliances and accessories. The company employs approximately 10,000 employees, with more than 1,800 company-operated and franchised stores in 48 states and Canada..

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"Aaron's is dedicated to the security of our customers," said Jason Tate, director of network services at Aaron's.

As a publicly traded company, Aaron's is obligated to comply with ETI (Ethical Trade Initiative) and PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) regulations. Other mission-critical application issues for the company include SQL replication and SIS data aggregation, or the ability for intranet traffic to hit reporting portals.

The challenge: effectively securing data from thousands of retail locations. In determining a cost-effective means of securely connecting its large, growing enterprise while maintaining performance, Aaron's decided to implement a virtual private network (VPN) over broadband connections.

The company aggregates large amounts of data from its stores back to its corporate office, so it also needed to control which applications utilize its VPN bandwidth.

"We need to ensure bandwidth is available for business-critical applications, which would in turn affect the performance in the operation of the stores," said Tate. "As our stores become hungrier for bandwidth, it is absolutely critical for us to deliver applications to them securely, and keep our costs down while doing so."

Aaron's also wanted to provide Internet access at the stores, but needed to make sure that the traffic was appropriately governed by a next-generation firewall to ensure core business functionality.

"Previously, we were able to see traffic volumes going across the corporate WAN, but we had no visibility of what type of traffic was going across the public gateways," said Ben Leggett, senior network engineer at Aaron's.

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Moreover, from an organizational standpoint, the company needed a solution that was easy and flexible to manage, as its associates use various learning management system (LMS) providers for internal training.

"We have to be able to respond quickly to our associates' needs," said Tate.

Tate's team evaluated a number of vendors before selecting a SonicWall solution.

"SonicWall delivers a tremendous amount of value in terms of cost, features and reliability," noted Tate.

"When we compared SonicWall feature-to-feature with competing solutions, SonicWall beat them hands down."

The solution: secure distributed VPN. The company implemented a secure distributed VPN connecting SonicWall Network Security Appliances (NSA) and E-Class NSA E6500 and E5500 firewalls in High Availability (HA) pairs in their corporate offices and regional fulfillment centers, with approximately 1,500 TZ Series firewalls distributed across the retail stores.

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By year end, Aaron’s will upgrade the firewalls in all of its stores to TZ 210 appliances. Deployable as unified threat management firewalls or next-generation firewalls, these devices offer flexible IPsec or SSL VPN connectivity, gateway anti-virus, anti-spyware, intrusion prevention, automated 3G or analog failover/failback as well as application intelligence, control and visualization.

“The TZ 210 firewalls sit between the Internet and our store and warehouse networks, and provide VPN connection back to our corporate office,” stated Leggett.

To provide flexible, responsive management, the company has also deployed the SonicWall Global Management System (GMS®) Virtual Appliance.

The result: lower TCO, flexibility and higher service levels “Deploying SonicWall was a game changer,” said Tate. “SonicWall gives us a great deal of flexibility that we end up needing due to our company’s growth. It was a lynchpin move that has helped us keep costs down.”

Tate continued: “It is important for us to save money using SonicWall because we have a low price guarantee and we keep costs down to keep prices down.”

The deployment has saved the company over \$500,000 monthly when comparing the connectivity fees on broadband to T1s.”

By securing VPN tunnels with the TZ 210 appliances for each location, we can leverage high-speed broadband at about \$79 a month instead of T1s at over \$400 a month,” said Tate. “It

allowed us to deliver more services to our stores because we were able to buy broadband at higher bandwidth connections.”

The solution made Aaron’s enterprise network more secure.

“SonicWall lets us contain our outbound access,” said Tate. “The users simply log in, and the firewall authorizes access based on their Active Directory identity. We have used the SonicWall firewall capabilities effectively to isolate and choke out malware attacks and to quarantine affected locations before they could infect anybody else”.

SonicWall GMS allows Tate to react quickly to last-minute demands from associates.

In addition, SonicWall’s application intelligence, control and visualization have enabled Tate to see traffic from the stores and identify the applications traversing the remote networks.

“SonicWall also has a very intuitive architecture to manage and gives us peace of mind,” said Tate.

Tate has appreciated working with the SonicWall team: “Sales and support gives us the attention to meet our needs, and we can see that our input directly influences the SonicWall roadmap.”

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