



CASE STUDY

Investors Bank optimizes the customer journey by moving branches to the cloud

The East Coast US bank gains a single-pane view, prioritizes high-ranking traffic, and cuts support costs in half with Palo Alto Networks Prisma® SD-WAN



IN BRIEF

Customer

Investors Bank

Industry

Financial Services

Country

United States of America

Products and Services

Personal, commercial, and public sector banking and lending

Organization Size

157 branches

Website

www.investorsbank.com

Challenges

- + MPLS is expensive and doesn't provide enough bandwidth to perform tasks.
- + Lack of traffic visibility.
- + Inability to segregate traffic disrupts branch operations.

Requirements

- + Provide visibility into network-related issues.
- + Dedicate greater bandwidth for critical applications.
- + Operate smoothly with Investors Bank's existing security infrastructure.

Solution

Investors Bank selects Prisma® SD-WAN, the cloud-delivered, next-generation SD-WAN solution that delivers speed, lower support costs, and features that competitors couldn't match to improve customer service and security.

Customer service is front and center for Investors Bank, a publicly traded, full-service bank headquartered in Short Hills, New Jersey. The bank was founded nearly 100 years ago and operates over 150 branches throughout New Jersey and New York. Its mission is to help customers, employees, stockholders, and communities prosper by offering world-class banking solutions, honestly, earnestly, and responsibly.

Investors Bank wanted customers to have a consistent experience whether they were interacting with the bank online, at a branch, or at an ATM. Its vision for an omnichannel experience included providing customers with the ability to start a loan application online and finish it at a branch, or vice-versa. Customers would also have the option to communicate with bankers via video conferencing from anywhere they're located.

CHALLENGE

Overcoming legacy limitations requires a cloud-first approach

To achieve its vision, Investors Bank began a digital transformation effort a few years ago that included adopting a cloud-first approach. As part of this strategy, the bank's IT leadership sought to transition its branches to the cloud using a software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) solution.

In order for Investors Bank to attain its goals, it first needed to address its legacy branch network. It relied on a router and Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) as its primary network, along with a secondary broadband connection participating in a Dynamic Multipoint Virtual Private Network (DMVPN). MPLS was expensive and didn't provide enough bandwidth to perform required tasks. Without a next-generation SD-WAN, Investors Bank lacked traffic visibility. The bank also had no way to segregate traffic supporting back-office applications from customer traffic.

REQUIREMENTS

A best-of-breed solution is needed for seamless integration

Investors Bank sought a best-of-breed security solution that would improve visibility. It needed to be able to examine network and application traffic and pinpoint where problems were occurring.

IT leaders also wanted a solution that would provide symmetric traffic. Symmetric networks permit all devices to send and receive data at the same rate. They're important when greater bandwidth and fast speed are crucial, such as during video conferencing.

The Bank required a solution that would operate smoothly with its existing security infrastructure.

As part of its evaluation process, the bank vetted solutions from three SD-WAN vendors and also considered a fourth vendor that IT leadership had experience with in the past. While competitors couldn't meet all the requirements, Palo Alto Network exceeded them.

SOLUTION

Prisma® SD-WAN provides required visibility competitors couldn't match

Palo Alto Networks' Prisma SD-WAN was clearly the best fit to enable the branches to migrate to the cloud and provide industry-leading security.

As the world's first next-generation SD-WAN, Prisma SD-WAN met all the requirements and provided features competitors did not. For example, it was the only solution that enables visibility into Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) traffic across the web and could differentiate between application and network traffic.

Investor's Bank already used Palo Alto Networks Next-Generation Firewalls. By leveraging Prisma SD-WAN, the business gained single-pane-of-glass visibility into its infrastructure.

During the evaluation phase, Investors Bank's IT team ran Prisma SD-WAN through the network in transparent mode and collected data that helped them see how it would perform. "That's the beauty of Prisma SD-WAN," said Thava Kanaganathan, Vice President and Head of Enterprise Architecture at Investors Bank. "You can run it in transparent mode then look at all the data and see how it's going to help you out."

Once the team deployed Prisma SD-WAN, they leveraged Layer 7 intelligence to inspect traffic and for visibility into the customer and banker experience.

"With all the positive feedback we got, we went on to deploy 157 branches at the same time," said Kanaganathan. Investors Bank's small IT team was able to roll out Prisma SD-WAN to all branches in just four months. "We don't have a huge army of people, but we were able to do that. Each site took a maximum of 20 minutes," he said.

The bank created a detailed runbook to guide the deployments, which were performed during business hours. "Branches didn't even feel the difference. They went through the upgrade without any downtime," said Kanaganathan.

Palo Alto Networks engineers were on the phone to provide assistance during deployment to the first 10 sites. After that, the Investors Bank IT team was able to complete deployment by themselves. Palo Alto Networks also provided training to help the IT team get up and running and utilize Prisma SD-WAN to its fullest. Maintenance is minimal, consisting only of software upgrades.



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BENEFITS

Achieving improved customer service and ROI

With Prisma SD-WAN, Investors Bank saw several benefits right out of the gate. It gained the bandwidth it needed by aggregating the MPLS and broadband networks already in its branches.

The bank handles several types of traffic including core banking applications, ATM, and customer Wi-Fi. It's now able to segregate and prioritize traffic at both the application and the port levels, increasing performance and security. Traffic from known applications can go directly to the internet and bypass the data center.



I'd put my money on a firewall company for an SD-WAN solution for a financial company's peace of mind.

— Thava Kanaganathan, Vice President and Head of Enterprise Architecture, Investors Bank

Enhancing bandwidth performance while reducing costs is a game changer

Best of all, Investors Bank was ultimately able to eliminate MPLS and use the cost savings to install 4G broadband backup in all branches. Prisma SD-WAN allows the bank to prioritize traffic using that connection. With Prisma SD-WAN, it's seen a tremendous boost in performance compared to MPLS while achieving a 53 percent reduction in operating expenses.

The increased bandwidth allowed the bank to implement and prioritize video conferencing in all its branches, ensuring improved user experience. Customers can now communicate with bankers located in a different city or state. "With Prisma SD-WAN, the banker can do their job and the customer can get what they want. That was the main game changer for us," said Kanaganathan.

The top choice for financial institutions

Investors Bank sees its decision to select Prisma SD-WAN as the right choice for ensuring highly secure and optimized application traffic—a choice they'd recommend to any other financial services company considering a similar solution.

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Cloud security leads the way for digital transformation

As the next stage in its digital transformation, Investors Bank is exploring generating more resiliency and redundancy by creating high availability of the Prisma SD-WAN network in the public cloud. Adopting other Palo Alto Networks products along with Prisma SD-WAN enables Investors Bank to continue on its path of digital transformation and provide its customers with excellent service today and for years to come.

Find out more about how Palo Alto Network's best-in-class security solutions can help accelerate opportunities for your organization. Additional information is [here](#).



3000 Tannery Way
Santa Clara, CA 95054
Main: +1.408.753.4000
Sales: +1.866.320.4788
Support: +1.866.898.9087
www.paloaltonetworks.com

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