

Barrett Steel Increases Network Throughput Capacity Without Boosting Spending on Tooling or Maintenance



“People want to spend 99 percent of their budget on NDR and 1 percent on getting good quality data, when in fact that slider needs to move quite a bit further over the other side. Because if you’re getting too many unnecessary and unwanted packets into your tools, it doesn’t matter what you put on the NDR side. It’s garbage in, garbage out.”

SAM AINSCOW
CISO, Barrett Steel

CHALLENGES

As their network traffic increased, UK-based Barrett Steel wasn’t getting an accurate representation of the traffic passed through to its network security tools due to dropped packets. A non-Gigamon solution was replaced when sky-high maintenance fees raised worries about reliability and ongoing costs.

SOLUTION

- + GigaVUE® HC-1 series visibility nodes
- + GigaVUE-OS Flow Mapping®
- + GigaSMART® De-Duplication

CUSTOMER BENEFITS

- + Reliable network visibility and load balancing across tools will accommodate network throughput expansion without necessitating expensive investment in more NDR tooling
- + 1U appliance size makes efficient use of precious datacenter space
- + Massive savings on service maintenance plans vs. previous solution from Ixia

AN OLD FIRM WITH A NEW PROBLEM

Barrett Steel Limited is the UK's largest independent steel stockholder. A family-run firm founded way back in 1866, Barrett Steel has seen many changes in the world of business over the decades. But as company CISO Sam Ainscow explains, recently the Barrett's IT department was facing a very modern 21st century dilemma.

"We used to use SPAN port capabilities on switches to feed data into network security tools," he explains. "But that just wasn't working for us — particularly as we were starting to increase the traffic we were sending across the network. We could see that traffic was being dropped, so we weren't getting faithful representation of network traffic being passed through to our network security tools."

Initially, Barrett Steel turned to Ixia, a Gigamon competitor. But after receiving initial promises of low costs, they were soon faced with unexpected maintenance and support contracts. "The renewal cost for maintenance with Ixia was eye watering as a percentage of the capital cost of the equipment," says Ainscow. "And with the maintenance costs being that high, as a customer, you've got to ask the question: Is that a function of reliability?"

At that point, Barrett turned to Gigamon. "We have better technology in place now," Ainscow said. "We have more expandability than we had previously, and we have a solution that is achieving for us day to day."

THE GIGAMON SOLUTION

To improve its network visibility, Barrett deployed the [Gigamon GigaVUE H Series platform](#). Within their GigaVUE HC-1 visibility node, the company is running a bypass module that enables them to connect out to their network detection and response (NDR) tooling. Within that platform, they have the ability to run [Flow Mapping](#) and [De-Duplication](#).

All this is packed into a single 1U rack with an embedded network TAP module — and with datacenter space at a premium, that's preferable to rows of taps and aggregators and consoles. And, as Ainscow describes it, "It looks really cool in the rack."

MEETING YOUR NEEDS WITH NO FUSS

The deployment of the Gigamon solution at Barrett Steel went quickly; configuration went smoothly and required only "a couple of hours on the phone with Gigamon presales staff," says Ainscow. "And once we were up and running, we could see high fidelity, duplicated traffic passing into multiple tools simultaneously."

Barrett Steel plans to soon roll out the Gigamon De-Duplication feature. "We want to give decrypted packets precedence over encrypted packets, so we don't have to look at both," Ainscow explains. "That ultimately reduces the load on the tooling. And that means we can massively increase the throughput of our network while only slightly increasing the size of our tooling. Without the features Gigamon offers, we would end up having to invest in significant upgrades of our NDR tooling."

KEEPING EVERYTHING IN BALANCE

Ainscow is skeptical of expensive NDR solutions with slick, gamified interfaces. One of the main NDR platforms Barrett relies on is Zeek, a free open source platform. Some in the industry might turn their noses up at it, says Ainscow, but it is the world's most widely deployed NDR solution and in use in high security environments. "And of course," he says, "thanks to Gigamon, we're getting really good quality data into it."

In fact, that's the side of the equation that many shops neglect: "People want to spend 99 percent of their budget on NDR and 1 percent on getting good quality data, when in fact that slider needs to move quite a bit further over the other side," he says. "At the end of the day, if you're tapping in the wrong way or in the wrong place, or you're not filtering out rubbish so you're getting too many unnecessary and unwanted packets into your NDR tools, it doesn't matter what you put on the NDR side. It's garbage, in garbage out."

Gigamon has been absolutely up to the challenge, he declares. "We expected to get something that was going to faithfully duplicate traffic and then load balance it and input it into NDR — and that's what we got. It did what it said on the tin."

ABOUT GIGAMON

Gigamon is the first company to deliver unified network visibility and analytics on all data-in-transit, from raw packets to apps, across physical, virtual and cloud infrastructure. We aggregate, transform and analyze network traffic to solve for critical performance and security needs, including rapid threat detection and response, freeing your organization to drive digital innovation. In short, we enable you to run fast, stay secure and innovate. Gigamon has been awarded over 75 technology patents and enjoys industry-leading customer satisfaction with more than 3,000 organizations, including 80 percent of the Fortune 100. Headquartered in Silicon Valley, Gigamon operates globally. For the full story on how Gigamon can help you, please visit gigamon.com.

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