

# Leading plastics solutions company relies on Kerio Control for cyberthreat protection and secure remote work



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## Introduction



Hellyar Plastics has been the leading independent compounder and distributor of thermoplastics in the UK for more than 50 years. They provide plastic solutions for a wide variety of industries ranging from the construction industry to automotive manufacturing and the white goods market. With around 50 employees working at two sites, their main production facilities being in Kent with a recently opened second plant located in Poland, Hellyar has a reputation of distributing prime quality materials on time, every time, throughout the UK, across the European market and globally beyond.

Mark Taylor is the IT Manager at Hellyar Plastics and he takes his job very seriously. “I am solely responsible for managing all aspects of our IT systems,” says Mark who has worked at Hellyar for almost 35 years. “I worked my way up the company and have been their IT Manager for the past 13 years,” continues Mark, “and I’ve also been involved in the manufacturing and quality processes.”

Being involved in a company from the ground up means you have a solid grasp of its business needs and challenges, and the IT infrastructure that Mark has built up during his tenure at Hellyar is typical of what you often find at a well-run small- or mid-sized business (SMB).

“We have two sites,” explains Mark. “Our main site is at Whitstable in Kent and a few years ago we opened a second plant in Lowicz, Poland. The IT infrastructure at our main site is a VMware virtualised solution consisting of two physical servers and a storage area network (SAN) configured as a high availability (HA) environment. This setup currently hosts six virtual machines which handle our domain controllers, email system, print and file server and ERP system. Our connectivity consists of fibre internet while our internal network runs over fixed Ethernet and a small Wi-Fi network. We have a mixture of servers, desktop PC’s, and laptops, all running Microsoft Windows based operating systems.

We also use cloud services for our anti-virus and email spam filter solutions. Day-to-day support for our infrastructure is handled internally by myself with assistance from our remote support suppliers including Invicta Linux.”

## Looking for an integrated cybersecurity solution

A well-built infrastructure however can only do its job when it’s safe from outside threats. And with cyberthreats escalating more and more each year, defending your network and systems has become top priority for seasoned IT professionals like Mark. “Cybersecurity is very important to Hellyar Plastics,” says Mark, “especially as both of our sites rely upon the systems running at Whitstable. And with so many colleagues working remotely from home over the past year, a robust security solution is of absolute importance.”

Finding the right solution for securing Hellyar’s infrastructure against cyber attacks turned out surprisingly to be not so difficult. “When I became IT Manager in 2008, we were using a software-based firewall solution that was difficult to manage and a separate product for our Web filtering which the supplier chose to withdraw. So rather than replacing the web filter with another separate system we investigated options for a more integrated, one solution fits all, product.”

Then at that moment Invicta Linux, a trusted IT solution partner that had been supplying services and support to Hellyar for a number of years, suggested that they consider deploying Kerio Control, GFI Software’s all-in-one network security solution designed for SMBs that delivers unified threat management (UTM) without complexity. “Invicta recommended a new product from Kerio to replace our existing system,” continues Mark.



“Because of our increasing reliance on Internet services and our requirements for remote working and the need for web filtering, we decided that we needed a robust, secure, and configurable, integrated solution. Kerio offered such a fully integrated solution called Kerio Control that fulfilled all of our requirements.” Once he had decided upon Kerio Control, Mark looked no further. “Since we had worked closely with Invicta Linux for all our communication requirements over many years, we were happy to go with their recommendation of Kerio as it met all our requirements. So we didn’t consider any alternatives.”



## Putting the solution in place

Deploying Kerio Control at Hellyar’s production facilities in Kent turned out to be a straightforward exercise due to the expert assistance provided to them by Invicta, their trusted solutions partner. “When we first implemented Kerio Control in 2012,” Mark says, “we decided to use their software-based solution. We supplied Invicta Linux with a Hewlett-Packard MicroServer and they installed and configured Kerio Control on the system for us. Invicta did this work offsite, and once the system was ready, they brought it to our facility for final setup. It was a very smooth transition from our old firewall and Web filtering setup thanks to the help that Invicta provided for us.”

Since it was first deployed at Hellyar, Kerio Control has been successfully keeping their network safe and secure. But by 2019, the original HP server the Kerio software had been installed on was starting to show its age, so Mark decided they needed something more reliable than a solution running on an old commodity server. “In April 2019 we upgraded our software-based Kerio Control solution to using their NG500 hardware solution.” Mark is referring here to the fact that Kerio Control is available not just as software you can install on your physical server or virtual machine, but also in prepackaged form as a ready-to-use network appliance that runs the same award-winning Kerio software installed on specially matched hardware. The NG Series of Kerio Control Hardware Appliances is available from GFI in three different models that range from the NG100W and NG300W desktop units to the more powerful NG500 rack mounted unit which is the one that Hellyar chose to deploy—and with some measure of foresight as we’ll see shortly.

## Top marks for ease of use

What has been the overall experience at Hellyar of using Kerio Control? “My overall experience with Kerio Control has been excellent,” reports Mark. “The main thing I like about it is the user interface and its ease of use. The layout is well constructed, making it simple to find a required area. Any change or addition needed in the configuration is very intuitive, and also well documented through their online resources. I especially like the ease of creating Traffic Rules and Address Groups, and also the ease of adding or removing users for virtual private network (VPN) access. I also use the Status section on a daily basis to see who is currently connected to the system and to monitor their usage. And to date we haven’t experienced any issues to troubleshoot with the product.”

The simplicity of how Kerio Control works means that Mark can handle most of the administration of the product himself. “The initial configuration of all of our Kerio Control solutions has been carried out by Invicta Linux, and they still assist us with any particular requirements that may arise. But the day-to-day maintenance and changes to the system are carried out by myself—and it’s very straightforward.”

## Supporting a remote workforce

The superior, easy-to-use VPN capabilities of Kerio Control have come in especially handy for Hellyar during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“One feature of Kerio Control that has been heavily utilised by us during the pandemic has been the ability to easily add new VPN users,” says Mark. “With numerous lockdown restrictions in place, there has been a greater than usual number of our staff members working from home, including some who haven’t previously done this before. Kerio Control makes the installation and configuration of the VPN client on our users’ devices very straightforward. And the VPN system has been very reliable, even with the significantly increased demand.”

The result of this is that Hellyar has been able to maintain a high level of productivity at the company throughout the pandemic. “In terms of productivity, Kerio Control has helped us immensely during the COVID-19 pandemic by making it easy for us to setup new VPN users to allow them to work remotely whilst ensuring the security and integrity of our internal systems.

And being able to easily create groups and traffic rules for our external support suppliers so they can easily connect to our internal systems securely has meant that we've also been able to limit the number of physical visitors to our premises."



### Eliminating downtime through high availability

Mark's decision which we mentioned earlier about upgrading their software-based Kerio solution to a NG500 hardware appliance was more than just about retiring a legacy HP server. It was also a wise and forward-looking decision, because around the time that Hellyar installed their network appliance, GFI added high availability fail-over protection to their NG Series of Kerio Control hardware appliances. This additional feature now enables customers who use Kerio Control to reduce the risk and cost of lost connectivity while ensuring there is no loss of threat protection.

Hellyar bought into this capability soon after they deployed their new NG500 appliance. "After we upgraded to the NG500 in April 2019," says Mark, "we decided later to purchase a second device for high availability. We did this because a firewall is vital to the running of our company's IT systems, especially since access to our systems is relied upon by our colleagues in Poland in addition to our UK remote users. Despite the reliability of the NG500 Kerio Control unit, it was still an obvious single point of failure. So in October 2020 we invested in a second NG500 unit and configured them for high availability failover protection. This turned out to be reasonably easy to set up and configure as we were again assisted with this by Invicta Linux. So our current connectivity at Hellyar consists of two fibre internet lines connected to two NG500 units configured for HA."



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## The benefit from having peace of mind

It's often difficult to quantify a specific return on investment (ROI) when you deploy new technology or replace an older solution for your company. But there's more than money that's important to running a successful business. "The main benefits gained by our company from having Kerio Control are derived from its ease of use—that the system just works without any complicated configuration. This give me peace of mind, which frees my time up, time that can be otherwise spent monitoring or configuring the system."

Mark can also rest confidently that Kerio Control is protecting his network against threats and intrusions. "As the IT Manager, I have access to the log files and can see the great job Kerio Control is doing at stopping threats. So in that respect I do feel that our company is more secure. And with its ease of use, I definitely feel more in control of what is allowed or denied through our network." In summary Mark has no regrets about his decision to use Kerio Control at Hellyar. "We are definitely very pleased that we chose Kerio Control as it gives you a high level of security and protection. I would have no issues at all about recommending Kerio Control to other businesses. And GFI does seem to support their Kerio Control product well, with regular updates to the software, which is important to us as it demonstrates an ongoing commitment to their product."



## Unified Threat Management for the SMB

With its stellar capabilities for protecting the integrity of your network from malware and malicious activity, blocking unwanted web content that can drag down employee productivity, creating secure client-to-site and server-to-server VPN connections using industry standard protocols, and the ability to prioritize and monitor network traffic to protect your network against bandwidth-hogging web and application traffic, GFI's Kerio Control can provide your business with unified threat management, minus all the complexity that's often associated with most similar solutions. Kerio Control can be deployed rapidly into any IT environment and is easy to administer. You can get Kerio Control as either a software-based solution or a hardware network appliance, depending upon the needs of your business.

For more information see [gfi.com](https://gfi.com).



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