Brian: Hello?

Alona: Hi, am I speaking with Brian?

Brian: Yes, you are.

Alona: Hi Brian. This is Alona with it. Central station. I believe you've scheduled the call with us to provide a review for Cloudflare. Is that correct?

Brian: I did, I actually did. I don't do those very often, but I like both these companies. You only know Cloudflare, but like IP central and I like Cloudflare so I figured what the heck. Right?

Alona: Wonderful. Thank you so much for being proactive in this respect.

Brian: Yeah, I did. I did just wake up a little while ago. I did an all-nighter on a blackout problem on a file server. So I was pretty tired this morning. So if I missed early, I don't even know what time it is. Is this your first call.

Alona: No.

Brian: I think I missed a couple of appointments.

Alona: Oh wow.

Brian: It's not your first call. Okay. So I do apologize...

Alona: No problem. [crosstalk 00:01:09] are you okay to speak?

Brian: I am, I am. Yes, I am.

Alona: All right. So before we start, let's confirm some of your details. So I understand your company is not Ninos or nine us Realty. I'm not sure

Brian: It's actually [inaudible 00:01:29] services it's, [Ninos realty 00:00:01:36] is a division of, of Dublin way the services.

Alona: Okay, and your job title there, you're a VP or Director of IT.

Brian: VP, director of IT.

Alona: Okay. Great. So you used Cloudflare in the last year, is that correct?

Brian: Actually, no. I've just started using Cloudflare about two months ago.

Alona: Okay.

Brian: Two and a half actually.

Alona: Understood. So then once your review is published, would you like to publish it under your name?

Brian: Sure.

Alona: And we also mentioned your company or you would rather not?

Brian: I'd rather not. The company's not an IT company. It's a real estate and financial company and they have nothing to do with my past career or my future career or my career at all. I just [inaudible 00:02:32].

Alona: So just to clarify, Cloudflare has different products. Are we talking about DDoS solution?

Brian: I'm sorry one more time. We're talking about what again?

Alona: I see that CloudFlare has different products. We're talking about DDoS solution?

Brian: I don't understand the word you said D?

Alona: DDoS.

Brian: D dot.

Alona: DDoS. D-D-O-S.

Brian: DDoS. Oh, thank you, DDoS. Yes. I have a little bit of experience with that recently, about two and a half months ago we got hackers at our front door, meaning they were my first firewall, they didn't seem like they were getting past it for quite a while. So I left them alone. They were deterred, and then all a sudden a month ago, month and a half ago, bam. They were passable firewalls and into my networks and that's when I got ahold of a Cloudflare.

Alona: Oh, wow. Okay. So then is Cloudflare a SAS solution or you host it on [inaudible 00:03:42]?

Brian: Well, Cloudflare is actually, I think they started out as a website security solution and they've kind of morphed into an all around security solution for the one thing that everybody's always afraid of it and I was even afraid of it. In fact, my employer was afraid of it. Everybody is afraid of it. You put up a big sign that says, Hey, I'm over here. I got information and just about everybody on the planet gets to see it.

Alona: Oh okay, so what can you-

Brian: So we did that next thing I know I'm getting 5,000 hits a day. Not exactly knowing where they're coming from [inaudible 00:04:21] proper analytics analytical but it turns out they're all coming from Turkey and Russia and the Ukraine, a couple of other places and they were all nasty grams.

Alona: So what is your primary use case for the solution?

Brian: Primary use case would be immediate wrapper type security solution. So one of the things that intrigues me so much about Cloudflare is they take a different approach than the general approach that's been taken, which is to put an in-point monitor on a workstation. Well, that kind of failed me, and here's why I have Webroot. I was also running GlassWire just to keep a record in case Webroot didn't do its job, and I've had Webroot for six, seven years. Neither one of them detected what was going on. They were actually just sitting there waiting for it to get past the security on the file server or the workstation.

And I never really thought of it that way before. I mean I put a firewall up. Yes. It has rules has deterrence, has security but it doesn't have as good or reporting as I would like or deterrence mechanisms as I would like.

Alona: You mean Cloudflare doesn't?

Brian: No, no. Cloudflare does. I'm talking about a standard firewall.

Alona: I see.

Brian: Level one or level two firewall. They don't carry the kind of weight that they need plus you got to keep up the firmware, and I was a little upset with a Linkses because I go looking for firmware about once every six months or all the equipment that requires firmware updates, [inaudible 00:06:27] and routers and switches, things like that. There was none and then all of a sudden this happened and they called it zero-day because half the world got hacked and all of a sudden I've got a brand new firmware for a product that hadn't seen a firmware and almost a year and a half.

Alona: Gotcha. So that is the primary reason why you went with CloudFlare, correct? Because the regular standard firewall tools were not able to protect you so to say.

Brian: Correct, it sounds like a Fortinet or a Cisco system. I mean, Cisco, that's my understanding I've been doing IT for 35 years. I used to work for the federal government. I pretty much with a group of people designed the land system security land system for the federal government back in the early nineties. So I know a thing or two I've seen a thing or two and I've done a thing or two when it comes to IT and you can't plan for every contingency, it's not possible but you can plan for what the contingencies are available to you at this time and when you leave on the cloud in-point kind of don't make sense anymore.

You need your protection from the cloud, in the cloud, on the cloud. So I went and talked to [Callways 00:08:01], I went and talked to a Fortinet I talked to a bunch of companies for about two weeks, got all the information I needed, and I ended up landing, literally landing on a Cloudflare because they offered the remediation, the blockage, the deterrent, the detection, and the reporting all in the same package. I didn't have to buy it separate, I didn't have to go out and find a different vendor like I had to with Webroot because Webroot pretty much for the firewall, no different than Microsoft firewall. Casseroles has detection. There's no great reporting repertoire with the customer but if management is in the cloud. So it tops between the cloud and the in-point all the time [inaudible 00:08:51]. So that may have been an opening I didn't know about.

So if my security is a complete rack around like entry to my ISP, with a VP and going in to keep my external users nice and safe and snug and crypted, then I think there's going to be a lot better.

Alona: Well, sounds like-

Brian: They even have a utility sitting in the front door. Yeah, because they bolt right past. What surprised me was, I've always done redundant firewalls. The endpoints have firewalls. So if they would have got past the security of the falser, past the security of the workstation, they would've gotten into the operating systems, which hopefully the firewalls there would have stopped them but why would I want to bank anything on a hope.

Alona: Right, of course.

Brian: They got second, yeah second they got into my network. I called the owner company said, we're shutting everything down. We're turning it all off. He said, "Are you kidding me?" I said "Nope." I've never had anybody go through two completely different [inaudible 00:10:01] by the way, two separate firewalls that means...

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Brian: ... being pressured [inaudible 00:10:02], two separate firewalls. That means that they had to go through one, then they had to go through another and they did it very quickly. So I was very disappointed in both firewall manufacturers and their lack of firmware to fight the inconsistencies in their firmware that allowed for it just to happen.

Alona: So now, can you summarize for me? During your evaluation of other tools, you've mentioned and comparing also Cloudflare to them. What were the main differences, both pros and the cons between these solutions?

Brian: Well, so Call Ways, they were a real good second runner up. Not only because of the sophistication of their cloud monitoring system, but it turns out they have zero remediation, which means that they will tell you that you've got a problem. They will blast it to you and let you know you've got an issue, but they won't and can't do anything about it. So that was stopping it from you there. Support Net, obviously, task the company. I'm still looking at them as a primary firewall to replace the firewalls that I'm going to basically retire. And I just accidentally found Cloudflare, which offered me a lot more than any of those companies, because the first thing that it did was it encrypted all my traffic, no doubts about it.

And so it was like a golden wand from a fairy that basically waved over my complete system and made it all encrypted, which was really fantastic because I didn't know there were some parts of it that were not. Then it got a little hairy, so I told my employer that, okay, I'm going to use their firewall. I'm going to buy their professional series and get their firewall because it makes sense the way that they've done it. And boom, the second I did, all my DDOS went away. We were running a major DDOS attack.

Alona: Okay. [crosstalk 00:12:28] So, that's also benefits or improvements that you've seen since you've implemented the Cloudflare. Okay.

Brian: Well, yeah. So, if somebody is walking into your business, any business it is, he walks into your business and says, hey, you have hammers, and you're not a hardware store, you know that they went to the wrong place. No biggie. You send them down to the hardware store down the street. But if they walk in and they say, Hey, I'd like to talk to somebody about security, it's better to have the appropriate security they need than offer them something that you want to work but doesn't. Do you understand?

Alona: Yes. All right.

Brian: So Microsoft is on my big naughty Christmas list, so to speak, because they failed as well. I mean, I wasn't happy. Granted, they didn't get past my firewall, into my IIS server because that's where they were headed. They were headed where they thought was all the financial information, but the IIS server was actually different than the financial services. They didn't even know that that existed, but I wasn't going to wait until they did. That's why I shut everything down for three days and reconfigured firewalls and reconfigure everything and brought it back up again.

Alona: Okay. Fair enough. Now, since you've used Cloudflare, can you identify some room for improvement within the product, or maybe additional features that you would like to see included in the next three leases?

Brian: Well, they're already doing it. So the stuff that I was saying in my head was it'd be nice if they accomplished some VPN style without the VPN traffic capabilities. And sure enough, with teams, they got a tunneling system's.It's not quite VPN, but it's not quite HTTP traffic, either. So, it's a very robust and different system, which, is in my opinion, because I've been doing this for so long it's what needs to be done. New and innovative ways to protect clients data should be the focus, not selling something that you've had for 25 years.

Alona: Okay. Was the initial setup of this solution straightforward or complex in your experience?

Brian: Well, in 35 years, I've seen all kinds of different attacks. I've seen attacks from within. I've seen attacks without. I've done remediation on people that have been attacked and needed remediation. Any system I've designed is always redundant to everything. And in fact, it's sometimes more than redundant to everything, and it's majorly monitored so that you know if something fails. On this particular system, I didn't have as much budget as I would have liked, but I still had the redundancy that I wanted.

Alona: So was it straightforward [crosstalk 00:15:44] or complex?

Brian: Yeah. So, I'm getting to the complex part. So the complexity was that, all of a sudden, after not thinking about it for three, four, five years, whatever, I found myself in a conundrum, almost an impossible situation. What I thought worked for all these years suddenly didn't work. So therefore, I had to rethink the way that I was thinking. So I took two weeks and basically went to school to see what was really available, too. I know how to fend off denial of service, but not at the magnitude that we were under. I mean, they literally shut down our internet. We have a redundant internet backed up in primary and they literally shut them both down. How they did that, I have no idea. I haven't even gotten that far in my investigation. All I know is it happened and I had to deal with it. So, like I said, I had been doing my research for two weeks, two and a half, three weeks. And I put my finger on the one that I thought was the most valued and it turned out to be right. [crosstalk 00:17:05]

Alona: Yeah. How long did deployment take for Cloudflare?

Brian: For the actual solution, 10 minutes.

Alona: And then? Did you have to do more?

Brian: 10 minutes. No. No.

Alona: Okay.

Brian: It was a matter of just literally giving them a credit card and flipping a switch. I swear to God, I thought it was going to be about four hours before it was implemented. But I can show you the grasp. It literally dropped off within 25 minutes of ... They didn't even turn it on. I turned it on, of me turning on the remediation and it's been fine ever since.

Alona: Nice. Did you have an implementation strategy or deployment plan for CloudFlare?

Brian: No. No. It was too quick and too furious. I've been in reaction mode for the last two months. I lost the backup domain controller. I lost it. The whole thing was really weird. The company that I represent, I'm in Northern California and they're in Southern California, so I'm eight hours away by car. Los Angeles had, at least where they're at, had a major energy spike, have no idea where it came from. I had a really good UPS, clean power, you could find waves straight, system that was working just fine. It blew it up. I mean, literally, just turned it on.

Alona: Wow.

Brian: And hit all the rest of the computers and turned them on, too. So I spent about a week rebuilding RAId drives, large weight, 15 terabyte RAID drives because they had obviously suffered some cataclysmic event, which was that power spike. And then, right after that, we started getting hacker hits and I was sending those off. And then I figured that, okay. And then once I got inside the network, I was just done. I was completely on the fence, going, Boss, I have never experienced anything this ruthless, immediate, or even the deliberate, nothing ever, in my whole career. And he's known me since I was 20 years old and I'm 57, 58 now.

So he trusts me explicitly and I had to look at him and say, I don't have an immediate solution. He says, well, aren't you supposed to call me when you have a solution? I said, well, therein lies the problem. What if I never come up with a solution? And he goes, well, that's a good point. I'd never hear from you again, would I? I said, Yeah, exactly. But I'm here to tell you right now, I'm working 24 hours a day.

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Brian: But I'm going to tell you right now, I'm working 24 hours a day, to find a solution to protect your network, because that's what you paid me to do.

Alona: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, so far.

Brian: I got sideswiped.

Alona: Sorry.

Brian: I got sideswiped. You know, I got sucker punched.

Alona: Yeah.

Brian: In my opinion.

Alona: So, so far, what do you think about stability of Cloudflare's solution?

Brian: Love it. I love their mechanisms. I love their gooey. I love their front end. I love their behind the scenes. Algorithms and everything all makes sense. I look at Microsoft and I say, you just don't make sense anymore.

Alona: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Brian: You made sense back in the 80s. You made sense in the 70s. You made sense in the 90s, kind of. Until we got the millennium and, and Vista and they didn't make any sense at all. But the point is, is that if you've been working in this industry for a long enough period of time, you know what makes sense and what doesn't make sense. And this box ware makes a lot of sense.

Alona: Mm-hmm (affirmative) What do you think about solutions scalability? If this question is applicable.

Brian: It is. They have made it so it's open ended. So like a Cisco. I used to work for Cisco, in fact, I'm a Cisco certified engineer. And they had a product line that kept evolving every year and they had a product development team that was projecting into 25 years. So they didn't really know what the future held, but they were trying to plan for it anyway. Well, IBM did that too. Back in the 60s, it failed. You got to go with where markets drive you. You've got to go where technology drives you and you got to go where competitors drive you. You can't just say, Oh, we've got this product line for the next 25 years.

Alona: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Brian: And then at the end of 25 years, you're at the back of the line, a real cylinder product because they stayed ahead of the curve. So that's what's popular. So they created an open end system for themselves that makes their customers very flexible in their decision making.

Alona: So at this point, is it only you who works with CloudFlare or there are other people that interact with it?

Brian: Not just me.

Alona: Okay. So in terms of the size of your environment, how extensively CloudFlare is currently being used, would you say like a hundred percent adoption rate?

Brian: Oh gosh, no. I'd say at this point I'm probably using 2% of their overall capability.

Alona: And do you have plans to increase usage of CloudFlare?

Brian: We're in the process of reevaluating our presence on the cloud, our data on the cloud and our ability to do work in the cloud. So that's the topic between me and the CEO, as far as, look, I don't know what to tell you. Microsoft is on this weird thing about office and when they want to convert everybody to the cloud, they've made some kind of weird deal with Google. They made this bot week, or it was Rico or Nikon. I think they bought some cell phone company. So they're plan to getting back into the cell phone business. So the point being is, is that, you got to go with the changes. You got to go the way that it all drives you.

Alona: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Brian: And my boss asked me, so why can't we just not do any updates and not do anything and just keep the servers off the internet?And I said, okay first off. You transmit every 5, 10, 15 minutes for emails. Also, you transfer electronic financial data to the IRS and other companies. How are you going to do that if you shut down your internet presence? Oh yeah.

Alona: Right, right.

Brian: He has no technical capability of making those decisions. And the answer to his question was completely the opposite. We have to embrace where we're going.

Alona: Right.

Brian: Not fight with it anymore. I fought with it five years ago. I thought with a ten years ago at Comdex, when everybody said, Oh, we're all going to the cloud. And I said, you can go there, but I don't want to.

[crosstalk 00:00:24:29].

Alona: Now it's inevitable.

Brian: It's inevitable. I've told my boss it's inevitable. We have no choice. I read most of Microsoft's end of life statements for the next 25 years. And literally desktops are going to go away. They're going to have everything in cloud. They're going to have AI servers managing it all. And bots that run around like people would and clean up little messages and make sure everything's tidy. Everybody's going to be a happy camper.

Alona: Have you used the-

Brian: Not sure if it's true.

Alona: Yeah. Well, eventually.

Brian: Yeah. We would hope.

Alona: Have you used the Cloudflare's technical support for their solution?

Brian: So they're [inaudible 00:25:19] The only problem that I've found so far. I've asked Cloudflare's support, whether it was for sales or technical support. And I got no answers back three times. I found the solution myself and whether they were monitoring me and saw that I found the solution myself is a possible probability. But then if I go look at the communities, which I have, there's just a little bit more people saying, I've asked you to fix this three times and I haven't heard anything. So their customer service, or their support is relatively the light for the size of the company they are. To the best of my knowledge. That's what I've seen. Yeah. Can't voice anything else, but that's what I've seen, which is [inaudible 00:26:14] for there. [crosstalk 00:26:16] Yeah. Go ahead.

Alona: Do you have any advice about pricing and the licensing of CloudFlare?

Brian: Well, I haven't challenged yet whether or not they're just so big and so nice and so generous that they are literally giving away services that cost hundreds of millions of dollars to develop for free. Like Starbucks. Starbucks gave away coffee for the first few years. They literally on the street corner of New York and everywhere else, Los Angeles, they literally handed out free coffee to everybody. They said, hey this is from Starbucks, we roast our own coffee. And that's how they branded themselves into a franchise or a large conglomerate that they are for coffee of all things.

So if that's the plan from CloudFlare, they may have a rude awakening at the end the day, because I don't think people are going to be as acceptable to the idea of, okay, for two years, three years, four years, whatever you charged us $5 or $6 for this service and then $15 for that server. So much for a membership, but it was reasonable. It's very reasonable compared to everything else. And now you're charging 50% more than everybody else because you're so big, like Microsoft guy and you can't. So it's kind of up in the air as far as, I understand their pricing and their marketing and how they're doing it, but it's what I see.

Alona: So have you seen the return in your investment with CloudFlare so far?

Brian: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. No, that solution, that one button solution. So all my data was encrypted before the hackers got passed by two firewalls. Encrypting your data does not keep hackers from getting in. It also, partially, doesn't keep them from [inaudible 00:28:22] your system by re-encrypting what's already encrypted. So yeah. So if somebody can get in and get ahold of your hard drives and literally encrypt them, they've got you literally by the nose hairs and they're pulling you wherever you want to go. Ask bill Gates. He had to pay a couple hundred thousand dollars to get into those personal services. That had to be embarrassing, by the way, for Bill Gates. So it's a wonder at the low price that they charge for some of the services and how well they work. I mean, I had barely scratched the surface with the automatic certificate or automatic certificates and analysis when all of this took place.

Alona: No, that's a great benefit to you. Like great.

Brian: Yes it was.

Alona: As long as it continues to be so affordable. Great. You win.

Brian: Yep. Yep. Well, it could have been in my opinion, could have been 10 times for what they charged me, so far. And I still would have paid it. If I knew exactly. But if the prices, like for instance, I deal with network analysis and monitoring all my career. I go in and I think it [inaudible 00:29:38] I look where everything's going and we got all the routing and look at everything and I make a determination where they went wrong, cause they do go wrong. And solar winds is a great package. Always has been always will, be kind of. Not to get off the topic of Cloudflare, but one of the products that I used to deal with, what's up, yeah, what's up from Wal-

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [00:30:04]

Brian: What's up. Yeah, what's up, from long time ago. I was there when the company got started in the nineties. Their minimum price for their product is $1,500, $1,395 for the base price, to even get the product in the door, into the house. And I looked and said, do you guys lower that price? There's no way I'm going to invest that kind of money, not knowing whether or not you guys are any good, still. Well, based on a demo, that's all you're going to give me. It's a demo.

Alona: So do you have any advice to people who are looking into implementing Cloudflare?

Brian: Yes. They have tons of documentation. I suggest you read it or they read it. There is, Cloudflare wants to, I think that's how they want their tech support to work is they want the community to talk. The community doesn't talk so well with each other like Microsoft community does because Microsoft's been around a lot longer. So that business model isn't quite working perfectly yet and they don't have experts come on and answer the questions. They want the users to come to the realization for themselves, based on what I see in the conversations in the communities. And that is a, kind of not to give you a bad time, but that's a millennial mentality. Let's make everything social. We don't have to be involved we'll just make it, we'll just make sure there's nobody saying bad words or telling somebody off or whatever, but why don't we let them solve their own little problems with our product. And that's kind of a issue with me because I've done this for so long. You can't have people of any education or any discipline or any background going to solve a problem product they didn't write.

Alona: So then on a scale of one to 10, where 10 is best, how would you rate the Cloudflare so far?

Brian: So based on my experience with Cisco and other companies, I would have to say a seven.

Alona: A seven. So why not 10?

Brian: Normally...

Alona: What is missing?

Brian: Because nobody can be 10. Nobody can ever be 10.

Alona: Yeah, absolutely.

Brian: Yeah, that's not possible [crosstalk 00:32:29]

Alona: But why not eight or nine per se. Why seven?

Brian: Seven, because they failed on the part of technical support. I feel I would have gotten to a solution faster, quicker, and more efficiently if they would have been there to just answer a couple questions. But instead, I had to read so much documentation to validate what I was about to do versus what I had already known I could do. And everybody else was saying, "No, let us have it, let us have it. We can do this. We can do this. Just gives a lot of money, we'll take care of it." So they almost lost me as a customer only because I had just, I had a little bit of time and I had the, call it gumption, the drive, they impressed me at first. They impressed me at second and I was willing to go onto the third. So I had the gumption to keep going. And I'm glad I did, but...

Alona: Fair enough.

Brian: I'm not happy with the road. It was kind of bumpy a little bit.

Alona: Right. I hear you. All right. So couple of disclaimers on our site, you obviously know that your review will be published on our platform. It will be made available to other users of our platform as well to consume your content. At any time, if you want to remain anonymous, you can switch that setting under your profile and neither your name or the name of your well, we are not publishing your company, but your name will not appear with this review. Also, once your review goes live, you will receive a link to your review so that you can access it, then edit it anytime you need. If you no longer want to receive any further email notifications from us relevant to your review, you can opt-out of them anytime. And your review will be subject to our terms of use that you can access at itcentralstation.com/tos. Brian, anything else I can answer or address before we finish?

Brian: Well, I'm very new to IT Central, it's IT Central, right?

Alona: Yes, I do Central Station, but everybody calls it IT Central.

Brian: Okay. I'm very new to your platform. And I'm actually pretty impressed that you guys have asked for somebody's, that is so new to your platform, expertise on another company, and could be a complete idiot. But I'm not, but I could be a complete idiot, could give you a whole bunch of bogus information that was useless to anybody. But I gave you the information I have based on my experience in a very, very troubling situation.

Alona: That's pretty much the same case for everyone who is leaving a review. It's totally based on their experience with a product that they use. We actually don't provide any sort of analysis or expertise. For example, like Gardner, we don't have Gardner quadrants. It's totally a user based platform where users of different various solutions share their experiences.

Brian: Right? So I've said Microsoft several times, but I just want to throw this out there. A lot of people don't know or understand, not even IT professionals that I've talked to, that Microsoft is going to a reputation-based security system, which is absolutely stupid because all you got to do is bad mouth your competitor enough and they start to lose the ability to do things. It's that simple. And I'm looking at it going, are you guys insane?

Alona: Yeah, not a very good strategy.

Brian: If you look at the operating system, yet not a good... My boss has asked me to find a different route than Microsoft and I unfortunately your software, all they control the software. So therefore the control OS market, that simple.

Alona: Yes, unfortunately.

Brian: When they bought into Macintosh in 1998 or 1996, seven, eight, eight, think it was 98, maybe I forget. Anyway, they pretty much controlled the market demand between the two companies. So they keep Macintosh at 10 to 15% market share.

Alona: Right. That's still the case. Well, Brian, appreciate your time and your expertise and the feedback about Cloudflare wish you all the best, have an restful day, if possible, and stay healthy. Of course.

Brian: You too. Thank you so much. Bye bye.

Alona: Thank you. Bye bye.

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