Boosting public sector network and data security

How Intergence introduced 24/7 security monitoring for Tendring District Council

intergence
PLATFORM.   DELIVERY.   EXPERIENCE.

THE CLIENT

Tendring District Council is a local authority in North East Essex, responsible for a rural and coastal population of approximately 145,000 people. With responsibility for services that range from housing, planning and recycling to leisure centres, public parks and beaches, the council administers an area that includes some of the most deprived wards in the UK, areas of significant affluence and a large population of retired people. During the summer, Tendring District Council also provides services to a large number of tourists, attracted by holiday hotspots including Clacton, Frinton, Walton and Harwich.

> " *In these politically turbulent times, public sector IT systems are more likely to be targeted by hackers than ever before. Tendring District Council is no exception.*

BACKGROUND & CHALLENGES

In common with all public sector organisations, data security is a key priority for Tendring District Council. Not only does it have to conform to stringent GDPR standards to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the personal data it holds, but its networks need to pass rigorous external checks by the National Cyber Security Council. Also, in these politically turbulent times, public sector IT systems are more likely to be targeted by hackers than ever before.

This presents a major challenge for the local authority, which has over 500 network users across almost a dozen council sites – not to mention daily-changing users of its public wi-fi. It also has to achieve more with less: against a backdrop of falling grants to local government, Tendring has seen its budget drop by a third. It's network security needs to be both cost effective and of an exceptional standard.

Financial constraints and a strong, modernising leadership have inspired the council embark

on a digital transformation journey over the last six years – both to improve its systems and reduce expenditure. Working with Intergence and other partners, Tendring has been upgrading its infrastructure and migrating many of its systems to the Cloud. Unimpressed by many of its previous outsourced services, it has also brought an increasing number of them back in-house.

This has thrown network security into sharp focus – its day-to-day implementation has become the full responsibility of the council.

FINDING THE RIGHT SOLUTION

Tendring District Council uses a wide variety of IT applications to facilitate its work. As well as common software such as Microsoft Office and website content management system Drupal, it also uses dedicated systems for administering its housing stock and rents, waste and recycling services, elections and leisure centres, as well as its income from all sources. It also periodically introduces new systems to make its work more efficient, such as an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) which it is currently rolling out across the authority.
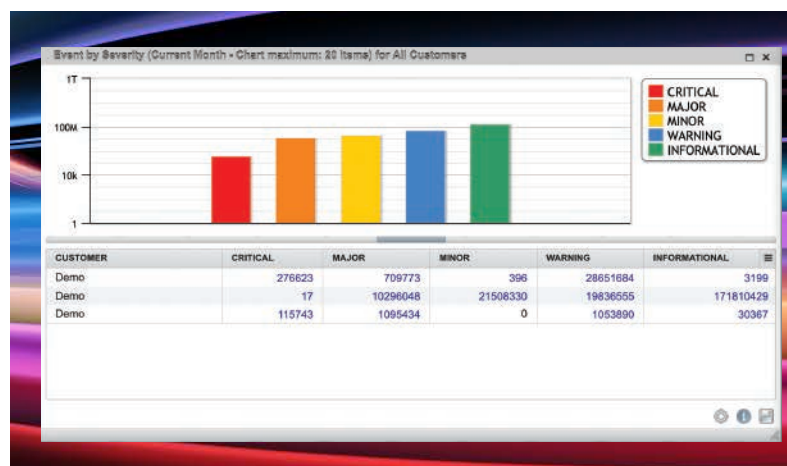
When you add items like routers, firewalls and both secure and public wi-fi, it's easy to see that monitoring the council's network for security breaches or compromises is a major and potentially daunting task.

Until the authority worked with Intergence, the only way to monitor the security of the network was to manually analyse different logs created by its full spectrum of software and applications. With only a small in-house team responsible for network and data security, this was a Herculean task – not only time consuming, but highly prone to error. Identifying unusual activity across the whole network could be like looking for a very small needle in a gigantic haystack.

As Intergence worked with the council to identify its security needs, it became clear that the authority needed both a cutting-edge software solution and ongoing support for its in-house teams.
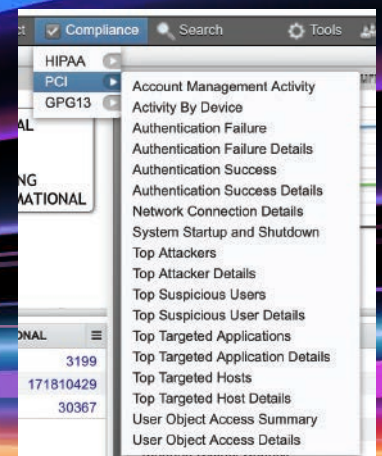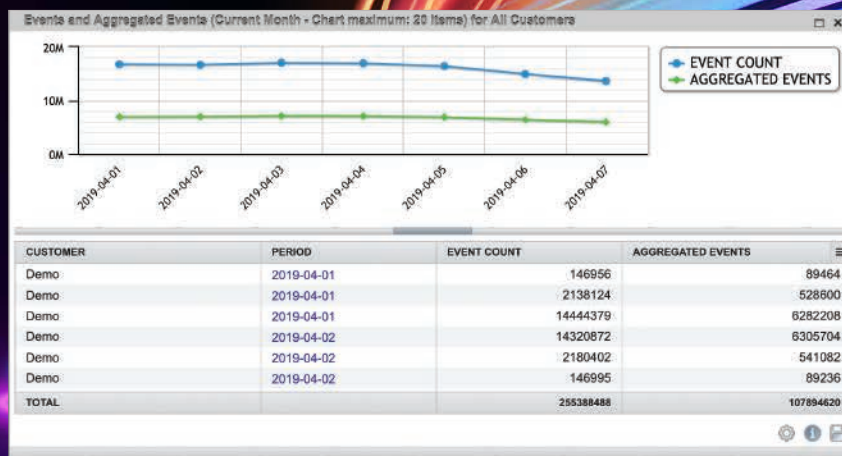
We recommended that the authority introduced the CYBERShark security and compliance platform. This automatically gathers logs from the council's IT systems, securely uploads them into the Cloud and analyses them for evidence of unusual activity and potential security issues. If it identifies a concern, key staff are immediately notified – enabling them to investigate immediately and take action if needed. At the same time, external security analysts receive the

> **"** CYBERShark gives us instant, round-the-clock security management and a holistic view of our network. Because we know that we will be alerted to any unusual network events, we can put much more of our time into mitigation and remediation.
>
> Sam Wright, Cyber Security & Systems Manager, Tendring District Council

same notification, meaning council IT staff can draw on their expertise if needed at any time – saving the council the cost of hiring extra in-house experts.

The introduction of CYBERShark has not only strengthened Tendring District Council's network security, but it has freed up valuable resources. Sam Wright, Cyber Security and Systems Manager explains: *"CYBERShark gives us instant, round-the-clock security management and a holistic view of our network. Because we know that we will be alerted to any unusual network events, we can put much more of our time into mitigation and remediation. The combination of the software and in-depth external expertise is highly cost effective at a time when we are having to make the most of our resources."*

Tendring District Council has found that working with Intergence to improve its network security has been a positive and constructive process. *"They are more like a partner than a supplier,"* notes Sam. *"They're knowledgeable, flexible and we have an excellent relationship with them. They're interested in what we do, they're familiar with our estate and they're very up-front about their costs – you don't get surprised by hidden charges. You know exactly what level of*

service you're getting, and I highly recommend it."

As for next steps, Sam is currently learning more about Stratiam network monitoring software, which has also been introduced in partnership with Intergence. *"It's very much about monitoring the health of our network, alerting us to anything that needs our attention – such as a switch that's down, or applications that need more space. These innovations are allowing us to use our resources much better while making sure our networks are stable, efficient, secure and compliant."*