

The Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court

Second largest county in the United States

Case Study

Situation

The Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court is located in Cook County, Illinois which is the second largest county by population in the United States with the county seat located in Chicago, IL. Chicago makes up about 54% of the population of the county and Cook County itself makes up more than 43.3% of the state's population.

In 2000, Dorothy Brown made history when she was elected as the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, becoming the first African American to hold that position and was re-elected to a second term in 2004. As the official keeper of records for all judicial matters brought into one of the largest unified court systems in the world, Clerk Brown is responsible for managing an annual operating budget of more than \$100 million and has a workforce of more than 2,100 employees.



Clerk Brown runs the office using five strategic pillars: 21st century information technology, customer service, operational efficiency, employee development and training and financial accountability. Her main objective, upon taking office, was to make the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County a leader in the use of technology and thereby make information faster and easier to access.

After building out the infrastructure with the help of the former Cook County Circuit Court Clerk CIO, and the now CIO, Bridget Dancy, formerly the Deputy CIO and Chief of Network Services, the office started to focus on network security. The Clerk's Office previously secured its network with Norton anti-virus software and a Microsoft Windows update server, while under Dancy's leadership as Chief of Network Services. Dancy later recommended that the Circuit Court Clerk's Office expand its security protection beyond anti-virus and integrate the software-based approach with a hardware-based solution to improve the performance of its network.

"We are a very technology dependent county. With so many documents being protected we can't risk jeopardizing the safety of information or easily tolerate significant hits to our network. All systems must be secure and up and running at all times," commented Brown.

Solution

After Ms. Dancy evaluated the various security options, with the help of System Solutions, Inc. (SSI), an information technology provider that offers complete business solutions, the Cook County Circuit Court Clerk's Office decided that a unified threat management appliance solution, which integrated all of the key security features they were seeking in a single hardware appliance, was the ideal approach.

"We are seen as the technology leader within the Cook County system and therefore, we are always looking for the best solutions for our network infrastructure," said Dancy. "When it came time to update our network it was critical that we selected a solution that would provide comprehensive and quality security, as well as enable high throughput, scalability and high-availability to enable us to be up and running 24/7 – it was an added benefit if we could get all this in one system."

Fortinet's FortiGate™-1000 enterprise-class multi-threat security appliance is located at the court's headquarters in Chicago and is integrating with Norton and Microsoft solutions. The FortiGate-1000 system is providing firewall, anti-virus and intrusion protection to six types of content repositories including the \$5 million "Integrated Cashiering System", which maintains all cash transactions for the county including traffic tickets fines and filing fees. In addition, the FortiGate-1000 will protect the case management system for the County Division, which includes mental health and adoption cases and the records management system holding more than 5.6 million county records. The FortiGate-1000 is also providing anti-virus protection for the Circuit Court's more than 2,100 employees' email as well as providing intrusion protection for its intranet and help desk applications.

Deployment:

FortiGate-1000 system
FortiAnalyzer-100

Industry:

Government

The Circuit Court Clerk also deployed Fortinet's FortiAnalyzer™-100 to easily manage and analyze traffic traversing the network of more than 800 computers. FortiAnalyzer systems are purpose built appliances that provide valuable intelligence and simplify and centralize the collection and analysis of log and event data from Fortinet's FortiGate security appliances, delivering highly relevant network reports, valuable intelligence on network usage and assistance with meeting regulatory compliance.

Success

The implementation of the Fortinet solution has allowed the Circuit Court Clerk to see many benefits. The FortiGate systems immediately met the county's needs by providing integrated firewall, anti-virus and IPS protection without impacting network throughput.

"In our first 107 days of having the Fortinet solution deployed, we did not have a second of downtime," said Bridget Dancy, CIO of Circuit Court of Cook County. "Although we experienced 381,407 attempted attacks against our network, the Fortinet solution blocked and protected us from every single attack."

The Circuit Court Clerk's small IT network services staff has greatly benefited by the Fortinet implementation. Previously having to travel to each of the 800 computers in 17 different locations when there was a network security issue, the staff can now centrally manage its network without having to leave their offices and no longer have to strain their limited budget and human resources by having technicians work overtime to go out to all the offices.

"One of the things we love about the Fortinet products is that because we know we're getting unparalleled security and frequent automatic updates, we don't have to spend all our time fixing the network and therefore we can focus more time and energy on being up to date with current technologies," concluded Brown.

About Fortinet

Fortinet is the pioneer and leading provider of ASIC-accelerated unified threat management, or UTM, security systems, which are used by enterprises and service providers to increase their security while reducing total operating costs. Fortinet solutions were built from the ground up to integrate multiple levels of security protection—including firewall, antivirus, intrusion prevention, VPN, spyware prevention and anti-spam -- designed to help customers protect against multiple threats as well as blended threats. Leveraging a custom ASIC and unified interface, Fortinet solutions offer advanced security functionality that scales from remote office to chassis-based solutions with integrated management and reporting. Fortinet solutions have won multiple awards around the world and are the only security products that are certified eight times over by ICSA Labs (firewall, antivirus, IPSec, SSL, IPS, client antivirus detection, cleaning and antispymware). Fortinet is privately held and based in Sunnyvale, California

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