Fortinet Advocates High Performance Security for High Flying Legal Firm

Business Challenge
Knights is a successful, fast-growing professional services company offering clients an attractive, high-quality alternative to big city legal firms. Knights has more than 220 staff at four locations and is on track to become a top 100 UK law firm by 2017.

While competitors focus on hourly rates and billable time, Knights recognises value differently. It measures the quality of its service by the accessibility of its professionals and speed of response. This has been enabled by a radical change to company structure, moving Knights from its traditional equity-based partnership model to one where management decisions no longer bog down key client-facing professionals. This change has been supported by significant investments in IT infrastructure empowering them to deliver a better service to clients.

With high-speed communications a top business priority, IT Manager Nigel Johnson had the challenge of enabling secure access to data from any location, which threw the spotlight onto Knights’ four main sites in Derby, Chester, Cheltenham and The Brampton, near Newcastle-under-Lyme: “We previously had standard Internet breakout between sites and we felt we’d outgrown this approach. Rather than rely on the performance of a public network, we wanted to switch to a single, private MPLS network that could offer better management control as well as plenty of room for growth. Achieving the network wasn’t the end of the challenge; we had to secure it without impacting the user experience.”

But Knights’ considerations for change didn’t stop there. In its relentless pursuit of maximum responsiveness and accessibility, the IT team saw an additional opportunity to improve the speed and security of data access. “Our approach to user authentication was effective but cumbersome. Strong, complex username and password combinations were issued to all users, and regularly updated to ensure the utmost protection. But this created its own problems. We felt users would be better served with two-factor authentication (2FA) for maximum security and rapid access.”

“"We won’t compromise on the security and integrity of the data we handle. With Fortinet we have world-class IT security solutions that deliver serious performance.”

– Nigel Johnson, IT Manager, Knights

Details
Customer Name: Knights
Industry: Legal/Professional Services
Location: Four UK sites

Business Impact
- Assured optimum speed and accuracy of core business activities without security compromise and regardless of user location
- Increased staff user satisfaction to help safeguard retention and attraction of key talent
- Supported strategic goal of business enablement through technology with management best practice and best of breed security and performance capabilities
Solutions & Results

Knights turned to trusted IT services partner Internal Central (IC) to recommend the best possible solutions to its challenges. IC is an accredited Fortinet Silver Partner and one of the UK’s top specialists for delivering security solutions to small and mid-sized businesses like Knights.

“It was very important to us that the solution be delivered as a managed service from a skilled provider,” recalled Johnson. “We aren’t security or network specialists, and we relied on IC to give the right advice. It was critical, strategically, that the solution we chose be ready for future expansion of the business.”

The managed service solution centres on a cluster of two FortiGate 100D security appliances situated at the breakout of Knights’ MPLS network within IC’s datacentre. With dynamic routing capabilities, a range of hardware accelerated switched ports and both IPSec and SSL VPN functionality, the FortiGate 100D is capable of up to 2.5Gbps throughput performance – well above the maximum bandwidth of its MPLS network. The cluster used by Knights/IC is configured to utilise all available security features provided by Fortinet’s FortiOS, the world’s most advanced network security operating system. This maximises protection without impacting the responsiveness that users expect.

“Our leadership team is very focused on getting the right tools in place and we feel we’ve achieved that with IC and Fortinet. IC takes on things like configurations, updates and QoS changes while we benefit from a very robust SLA.”

An additional FortiGate 100D is positioned at Knights’ main site in Newcastle-under-Lyme, while other sites each use a smaller scaled FortiGate 90D. “When we found that the FortiGate has an integrated authentication server, we saw the opportunity to use it,” explained Johnson.

Each FortiGate appliance links directly to Knights’ Active Directory, making it simple for the Knights’ IT team to manage user requirements internally. Knights uses this in tandem with FortiToken Mobile, the OATH compliant, time-based one-time password (OTP) application that forms the client component of a complete 2FA solution along with the FortiGate. “Setting up the network this way also supports the best practice logging and reporting protocols we wanted to establish for the long term,” he added.

“Our staff have very high expectations for technology,” concluded Johnson. “In the legal industry, a user experience that isn’t up to scratch can often be the reason why talented, ambitious professionals leave a firm. We’ve turned that risk on its head by providing an attractive environment that suits what staff need, and benefits our clients too. But we won’t compromise on the security and integrity of the data we handle either. With Fortinet we have world-class IT security solutions that deliver serious performance.”

“We now have a template for adding new offices efficiently and securely at high levels of service. We are in the process of deploying a FortiAnalyzer logging, analysis and reporting appliance to make these processes even more efficient.”