ShipServ provides the world’s largest procurement platform for the marine industry, helping marine buyers easily find suppliers, trade efficiently and build relationships with those trading partners. For suppliers, ShipServ provides a set of solutions helping them to serve customers more efficiently and gain access to new markets.

Founded in 1999, the company has seen continued year on year growth, serving 200 shipmanagers and owners, including some of the largest shipping companies in the world, who between them operate 9,000 vessels. The total value of trade on the ShipServ platform is $3bn per year.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA PRIVACY

Safeguarding customer data is a business-critical imperative for ShipServ. Dominic Aslan, vice-president of IT operations, noted, “Data integrity is at the very core of our business. It’s essential that our customers have absolute trust in everything we do: We want to make sure they understand how important ensuring the security of their information is to us.”

New initiatives to drive growth and rollout a suite of innovative products were catalysts for the ShipServ team to launch a project to determine the readiness of the company’s infrastructure to support the new objectives.

SETTING THE BAR HIGH

To facilitate the infrastructure evaluation, Aslan targeted the ISO framework of information security management policies and procedures. “Achieving ISO 27001 certification is extremely challenging for companies of any size,” he recalled. “But despite the efforts involved, we knew that attaining compliance with one of the most stringent, globally-recognized standards would provide proof of ShipServ’s commitment to the highest levels of security and risk management.”

One of the early findings of the infrastructure evaluation project was that each of ShipServ’s eight offices and two data centers had firewalls and edge security devices from different vendors. The resulting incompatibilities meant that

“ShipServ is experiencing unprecedented growth and the FortiGates and FortiGate VM give us the agility and flexibility to support wherever the business needs to go.”

– Dominic Aslan,
vice president of IT operations, ShipServ

WE COULDN’T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT THE FORTINET SOLUTIONS WE’VE IMPLEMENTED

DETAILS
CUSTOMER: ShipServ
INDUSTRY: Maritime Software
LOCATION: Head office London, England with global offices

BUSINESS IMPACT
- Enhanced security across on-premise and cloud domains
- Multi threat vector protection from single partner
- Resource efficiency
- Ability to use OpEx budget versus CapEx

SOLUTIONS
- FortiGate
- FortiGate VM for Azure
- FortiMail
- Fortinet Wi-Fi Management
CASE STUDY: Marine Shipping Marketplace Leader Moves to the Cloud with Enhanced Security and Improved Efficiency

protected connections – such as VPNs – could not be reliably created to securely link the various locations. A major tenet of the new infrastructure strategy was the increased utilization of cloud-based technologies. “We are looking at a ‘cloud first’ strategy; ultimately transitioning the majority of our computing resources and eliminating as much on-premise equipment as possible,” Aslan stated.

ShipServ created three virtual data centers that utilize the Microsoft Azure cloud services platform and has standardized on the cloud-based Microsoft Office 365 for its office applications.

SELECTING A PROVEN VENDOR

To identify the optimal security-related components for the new infrastructure, Aslan and his team looked at the incumbent products and undertook a sweeping review of security offerings from all the major vendors. “Fortinet solutions continually rose to the top in many of our key categories, and convincingly displaced our existing equipment,” recalled Aslan.

He continued, “Feature set, functionality and performance were our primary criteria but price was obviously important too. Reputation also was a significant factor for us. On top of our research results – given my personal experiences – I had absolutely no reservations in moving forward with Fortinet.”

To augment Microsoft’s integrated security measures, Aslan implemented a FortiGate VM for Azure virtual appliance to deliver heightened intrusion prevention across the entire ShipServ cloud organization.

SIMPLIFYING AND FORTIFYING THE IT INFRASTRUCTURE

The ShipServ network and edge security devices were replaced with FortiGate enterprise firewalls. Doing so not only elevated overall threat prevention capabilities but enabled the creation of secure connections between facilities. The company further enhanced its onsite network security with the addition of Fortinet Wi-Fi Management.

The comprehensive capabilities of the FortiGate range – for both physical and virtual appliances – delivers a rich set of choices for ShipServ. “The FortiGate has all the features I currently require and as we evolve into the cloud, I know I can activate additional layers of protection as our needs develop,” commented Aslan.

He added, “ShipServ is experiencing unprecedented growth and the FortiGates and FortiGate VM give us the agility and flexibility to support wherever the business needs to go. Being able to spread out the costs of the virtual appliances as an operational expense is another huge benefit.”

“Email is a heavily used communication channel but left unprotected, it can also be the most exploited threat vector,” reflected Aslan. “Integrating FortiMail into our O365 environment alleviates the risk from malicious attachments and is a key attribute of the services we provide.”

BIG GOALS, BIG RESULTS

Providing continuous access to its platform is a critical element of ShipServ’s success: “We’ve enjoyed 99.7% uptime over the last five years, and we see Fortinet as being key to sustaining and improving that number over the coming five years,” Aslan emphasized.

He continued, “Using a single partner for integrated protection across multiple threat vectors is another key benefit for ShipServ. If we need assistance, we don’t have to worry about who to call. We have a modestly-sized team and the common, intuitive interface across all the Fortinet solutions makes the environment much easier to support. Ramping up new team members is really quick too.”

Aslan concluded, “For me, Fortinet is an all-in-one cyber security company. Protecting a hybrid cloud/on-premise environment can be very complex but I’m very proud to say that we have attained full ISO 27001 accreditation. I view Fortinet as playing a big role in this achievement; we couldn’t have done it without the Fortinet solutions we’ve implemented.”

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