



Showtime keeps threats and exploits at bay with TippingPoint



CASE STUDY

User:
Showtime Arabia

Country:
UAE

Industry:
Broadcasting

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Background

Showtime Arabia is the leading Pay TV provider in the Middle East and North Africa, providing select programs to its customers on a subscription basis. It is owned by Gulf DTH, a joint venture of the Kuwait Projects Company (who hold an 80% stake) and Viacom Inc. (who hold the remaining 20%).

As the principal regional provider Showtime holds office in multiple states and boasts an advanced technological infrastructure, including a fully-fledged data centre in its Dubai office. Its computer network extends between offices in Saudi Arabia and Egypt and its headquarters in Dubai, running a variety of business applications including human resources, CRM and help desk.

Challenge

As a subscriber-based enterprise, Showtime stores highly confidential customer data on its network and relies on protecting the privacy of its customers' details. In 2008, Showtime endeavoured to bolster its security infrastructure in order to maintain data privacy and also to protect its B2B and B2C web applications against security breaches. Showtime's Senior IT Manager, Shabbir Nalwala notes that although there was a "mature security infrastructure in place", there was also a desire to ensure "nothing was left to chance".

The need to strengthen the company's external threat security was made all the more pressing by its intent to comply with the PCI Data Security Standards (PCI-DSS). The PCI-DSS dictated that Showtime had to upgrade its threat identification process, a process Nalwala describes as inefficient, inaccurate and time-consuming. It involved IT staff manually identifying threats (through research) and then responding through coordinated action. In its place the PCI-DSS required the introduction of an Intrusion Prevention System (IPS) to act as the primary means of perimeter defense.

Solution

Showtime's security ambitions necessitated the introduction of an IPS, but the company held requirements for a solution that was cost-beneficial and effective. Showtime's Nalwala conducted a market evaluation, comparing vendors on features, throughputs and manageability, ultimately selecting an IPS solution from TippingPoint.

Nalwala explained that there were multiple factors that affected his selection of both the provider and the model. He noted that TippingPoint's relationship with Microsoft and other vendors is such that if there are any vulnerabilities in its own solutions, their associates release the corresponding signatures, leaving little room for system breaches. However it is the many facets of the system that Nalwala cites as integral to his decision.

"The system's automated nature," he continued, "means that at a click, we can identify the threats and vulnerabilities within the network and teams can immediately start working on addressing the vulnerabilities."

In addition, the system's features stand to increase both the network's perimeter security and the functionality of the IT department. Aside from basic quarantine and isolation functions, the TippingPoint system has a zero power, high availability feature, allowing the IPS to continue processing data packets even when the network suffers a power failure. TippingPoint Security Management System reporting capability "proactively alerts the management whenever there is a risk and provides a number of reports for its internal analysis on threat behaviour and compliance".

TippingPoint





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Result

A traditional concern with the deployment of an IPS on a network is a fall in network performance. The IT department at Showtime however "has not had any degradation in network performance since the IPS' installation," according to Nalwala. Further explaining the success of the system, he detailed how they have achieved a return on the investment within its first year.

Showtime's future plans include extending the systems coverage from perimeter defense to data centre protection (to combat internal threats). Nalwala also believes that by the year's end, he will have established a centralized management/monitoring function, to operate with Showtime's branch offices.

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