

General Information

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CoSoSys Protects Client Workstations

Secure It Easy Guards Against Data Theft & Virus Infection From Portable Storage Devices



VIPdesk was in a quandary. Because the company's agents work from their home computers, it needed to be able to show its financial clients, such as MasterCard, that its security policies and technologies were even more secure than those at competing companies using traditional network architectures.

So VIPdesk (www.vipdesk.com) contacted three big security companies to see whether any of them could supply the right security to VIPdesk's unique setup. All three said yes, they could, but when Dan Fontaine, vice president of technology at VIPdesk, met with the engineers at these companies, all of them admitted they were unable to implement the technology VIPdesk needed.

"When January [2008] was coming around, they said, 'We can't do this because workstations need to be part of the domain,'" says Fontaine. "Meanwhile, we had a definite deadline when we needed to make this happen."

VIPdesk needed to find a provider that could meet its needs ASAP. Fortunately, Fontaine found CoSoSys' Secure It Easy (www.cososys.com), which met VIPdesk's needs and was inexpensive to boot.

■ A Need For VIP Security

VIPdesk offers clients both concierge and contact center solutions. When you call MasterCard concierge services to, say, book an itinerary and hotels for your trip to Europe, you are speaking to one of VIPdesk's home-based agents. And during peak occasions, such as the Christmas shopping season, you may find yourself talking to one of VIPdesk's agents when placing an order with your favorite catalog retailer.

VIPdesk's environment is unique because the company does not supply workstations to its 700 or so agents. Because its agents use their own PCs, Fontaine says that VIPdesk cannot lock down these machines through an Active Directory domain policy.

"Because these machines are not part of our domain, we cannot send out policy to block [portable] devices," says Fontaine. "We're taking services traditionally offered in a brick-and-mortar call center, where a manager can walk the floor and look over an employee's shoulder to monitor what someone is doing within our CRM or whether [he or she] is looking at too many credit card records too quickly."

Fontaine says that VIPdesk's security is just as secure, if not more so, than traditional brick-and-mortar call centers. VIPdesk has a lot of technical infrastructure in place and conducts at least five onsite security audits each year. The company uses firewalls, intrusion prevention systems, and other monitoring capabilities to keep track of its agents' activity. It uses NAC (Network Access Control) devices that look at its agents' PCs to make sure they have the latest antivirus definitions, firewall software, and application updates, among other things, present before they are allowed to log on to the company's VPN.

However, this security setup lacks an endpoint security solution that can keep USB thumb drives,

CD-write drives, iPods, smartphones, and other portable devices from connecting to these client PCs and accessing sensitive data. Fontaine says VIPdesk's financial services clients needed to be assured that these devices can be locked down from VIPdesk's agents' PCs so that these clients' customers do not have to worry whether the wrong person is accessing their credit card and Social Security numbers.

■ Great Service, Easy Deployment

Although CoSoSys' Secure It Easy was the only endpoint solution that fit VIPdesk's needs, Fontaine says he may well have picked it over another solution because of CoSoSys' superior customer service. "They were great to work with. They made themselves available even before we made the purchase," Fontaine says. "They made themselves available for meetings, provided us with a trial of the client when we were experimenting with it, and if we had any questions, they responded quickly."

In addition to its ability to lock down client computers, Secure It Easy integrated easily and smoothly with VIPdesk's NAC-based system. VIPdesk paid CoSoSys a one-time license fee for several client licenses along with a minimal annual service fee.

According to Fontaine, VIPdesk succeeded in implementing CoSoSys' solution from start to finish on all its agents' computers within a week. Installing Secure It Easy was extremely simple for end users. "Essentially they just had to click and hit 'next' a couple of times, and they were done," says Fontaine, adding that the installation came with two pages of big screen shots that explained to VIPdesk's agents what they were about to experience and what to do if they encountered any problems.

Once installed, the Secure It Easy client runs as a service in the background, Fontaine explains. While it's running, agents cannot copy information to any type of portable or CD-write drive. VIPdesk's NAC infrastructure checks to make sure Secure It Easy is running, and if it is not running, the end user gets an error message that tells him to install the software so that it is running or to call VIPdesk's technical support to find out what is preventing Secure It Easy from doing its job. In any event, the agent cannot work for VIPdesk's customers unless Secure It Easy is working on his computer.

■ No Regrets Whatsoever

"I don't have any regrets with going with Secure It Easy at all," Fontaine says. "It has met all of our needs, as well as the requirements of our financial services clients."

Fontaine adds that in the near future VIPdesk's other clients will most likely adopt the same sort of security requirements its financial clients presently need. "We are constantly trying to improve our information security and make the delivery or automation of it that much more efficient," he says.

When asked what he would like to see in future iterations of Secure It Easy or CoSoSys products in general, Fontaine says he would like to be able to do screen recording on remote environments for the purposes of quality control or to track employees' actions. "That's very difficult to implement in a home-based environment because of bandwidth," says Fontaine. "You have to send all that information off of a person's high-speed Internet connection to a location to be stored, whereas if you're on a LAN (local-area network), it's easy to accomplish because you don't have to worry about Internet speed or bandwidth."

Because such a product would reside on a person's workstation, it could capture those recordings and potentially upload at a more convenient time, such as when the end user isn't working. Moreover, it could possibly be used as a full-fledged NAC because it could restrict access to certain network resources if the end user fails to implement a VPN or firewall and also scan at intervals to make sure these security agents are still active. Fontaine says that if CoSoSys offers such a solution, he could see replacing his NAC-based security setup with this solution. ■

by Robyn Weisman

CoSoSys Secure It Easy

Endpoint PC security system protects client workstations from viruses, data theft,

data leakages, and other threats that portable devices with internal memory can pose

“CoSoSys was actually the one company that was able to offer the solution that would work in our environment, where our end users’ workstations are not part of our domain, and [Secure It Easy] was really reasonably priced, so even our CFO was happy about that,” says Dan Fontaine, vice president of technology at VIPdesk (www.vipdesk.com).

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