



WatchGuard Shows Annual Rate of Return at City of Stirling

A Case Study in Network Security

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BACKGROUND

With a thriving population fast approaching 193,300 and a total land area of over 100 square kilometres, the City of Stirling is one of Western Australia’s major local government authorities and the largest local government authority by population in the state.

Split into seven wards, Stirling lies approximately eight kilometers north of the Perth central business district and stretches across 30 suburbs from Railway Parade, Mount Lawley in the East, to the Indian Ocean suburbs of Scarborough, Trigg, North Beach and Waterman in the West. The city’s 11,500 small businesses represent 11 percent of the state’s small business and a significant employment opportunity.

CHALLENGE

Two years ago, the City of Stirling was faced with the challenge of improving the flexibility and responsiveness of information and communication technology (ICT) to the business. To this end, Peter Bennington, Chief Technology Officer, Corporate Information Services, City of Stirling, embarked on modernising the city’s ICT infrastructure and systems which included upgrading the organisation’s WatchGuard firewall infrastructure that, at the time, had been in place for more than seven years.

Overlaying this challenge was the key organisational driver of sustainability. The City was keen to reduce its environmental footprint, in all areas, and ICT needed to contribute to the overall sustainability efforts. In conjunction with a decision to pursue consolidation of the organisation's server infrastructure through virtualisation, Bennington and his team decided to update the city's firewalls in order to continue supporting the security needs of what in reality is a major Western Australian business serving the needs of around 850 employees across 26 different locations.

“Without a doubt, we are a \$200 million business and cannot afford to risk people poking around our finance systems through less than satisfactory security. As a chief technology officer, I needed to demonstrate that we had adequate security in place for the future protection of our staff and ultimately, the community,” says Bennington.

WATCHGUARD® SOLUTION

Following a review of various market solutions, City of Stirling resolved in favour of continuing with WatchGuard and the successful association that the council had developed with the security provider's Western Australia Expert certified partner, Silverfern IT.

“We reviewed the firewall security market but had been very pleased over the years with the performance of WatchGuard technology. The coupling of intrusion detection and intrusion prevention with built-in anti-virus protection was very appealing. In addition, we were impressed with the solution's automatic redundancy failover as well as WatchGuard's ongoing research and development into its solutions which had seen continued innovation in both feature and functionality,” said Bennington.

As a result, The City of Stirling deployed two WatchGuard Firebox X Peak 5000e appliances, one based at its central administrative and data centre location in Stirling itself and another appliance at a remote depot facility ten kilometres to the north. This affords the organisation redundancy and automatic failover in the event of an emergency. At the same time, the two appliances enable the ICT team to handle any future upgrades without the need for a network shut down or asking staff to perform an upgrade over the weekend.

“With two firewalls, the appliances can share the interval load. If one fails, we have built-in redundancy though this situation has not arisen yet. In the event of a disaster, the depot appliance can run all the systems and still keep the Internet nasties away from our network.

“Another benefit of the technology is that WatchGuard is an appliance-based solution. As a result, it is easy to manage and simple to configure. When we do a Fireware OS upgrade, we can copy the configuration settings over. It is all so simple to deploy,” says Bennington.

The WatchGuard Peak appliances keep network traffic moving with up to 2.3 Gbps firewall throughput and 600 Mbps VPN throughput and are powered by Fireware® Pro, an advanced OS that provides flexibility, redundancy, and reliability. At the same time, WatchGuard's appliances can be upgraded to a higher model in the future using a software license key, enabling the City of Stirling to enhance sustainability as there is no requirement for new hardware or no obsolete hardware to dispose of.

The council's WatchGuard infrastructure is rounded out by two Firebox X Core 1250e and two Firebox X Core 1000e devices. These integrate application layer content inspection and include WAN and VPN failover to increase performance, redundancy, and reliability. At the same time, real-time

monitoring and reporting give an unprecedented view into network security activity, allowing the council IT team to take immediate preventive or corrective actions.

At the same time, Silverfern IT conducts regular reviews and provides advice on partition configuration setting and upgrades.

“Silverfern IT continue to take good care of us and have helped out with all aspects, including peer reviews, onsite training and assistance with implementation and tuning,” says Bennington.

BENEFITS

With seamless deployment and ongoing reliability, Bennington oversees extensive, annual penetration testing of the WatchGuard firewalls. The testing is conducted by a third party provider with the aim of maintaining the IT group’s best practice approach to managing infrastructure.

With the City of Stirling running recreation centres, six libraries, child care facilities, and the usual range of municipal facilities, the IT team leaves nothing to chance and the robust quality of the WatchGuard product has proven its strength year after year.

“The external penetration tests haven’t got anywhere near the firewalls with the WatchGuard architecture again and again proving their capability to throw back any potential attacks. They are indeed providing a great return on investment to the City.

“Depending on what firewall you put in, it can be a significant overhead. WatchGuard is cost-effective. It is robust, works well and its ease of use ensures that the IT team can focus on planning for tomorrow’s City of Stirling rather than working behind the scenes handling day-to-day technical problems,” says Bennington.

One of these future infrastructure deployments may see WatchGuard deployed to provide wireless security but in the meantime, as Bennington explains, “WatchGuard ticks over, provides brilliant protection from potential internet security threats and doesn’t come with a huge system overhead. It is good to see that WatchGuard is evolving the product – they are not staying still with their products. The intrusion detection feature is an example of this,” says Bennington.

ADDRESS:
505 Fifth Avenue South
Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98104

WEB:
www.watchguard.com

U.S. SALES:
1.800.734.9905

INTERNATIONAL SALES:
+1.206.613.0895

ABOUT WATCHGUARD

Since 1996, WatchGuard has been building award-winning unified threat management (UTM) network security solutions that combine firewall, VPN and security services to protect networks and the businesses they power. We recently launched the next generation: extensible threat management (XTM) solutions featuring reliable, all-in-one security, scaled and priced to meet the unique security needs of every enterprise. Our products are backed by 15000 partners representing WatchGuard in 120 countries. More than a half million signature red WatchGuard security appliances have already been deployed worldwide in industries including retail, education, and healthcare. WatchGuard is headquartered in Seattle, Washington, with offices throughout North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, and Latin America.

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