



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Bethesda, MD, US

ORGANIZATION:
Ameritas Investment Corp.

YEAR:
2011

ORGANIZATION URL:
<http://www.aicinvest.com>

STATUS:
Laureate

PROJECT NAME:
Fiberlink Endpoint Security

CATEGORY:
Safety & Security

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Ameritas Investment Corp. (AIC) is an insurance owned broker dealer supporting over 1300 financial advisors nationwide. AIC's financial advisors are independent contractors, and as such AIC's advisors are contractually responsible for selecting their own technology solutions to run their business as well as being financially responsible for the use of selected technologies. This has created an environment where there is little standardization which makes support and oversight increasingly difficult. Most advisors use Windows desktops and Blackberry's while others use Mac laptops and iPhone's. AIC's independent advisors may also manage their own network and internet connectivity. With cyber crime on the rise and continuously changing, both state and federal regulators are tightening rules on protecting client privacy especially on electronic data. Massachusetts and Nevada now require encryption on portable devices that contain personally identifiable information (PII). The SEC has taken recent action on firms that fail to have reasonable policies and procedures in place to satisfy the requirements of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. The challenge for AIC is how to help reasonably ensure our customers' personal financial information is protected when information is used by and maintained by our financial advisors on their computers, mobile devices, and other electronic

systems. AIC wanted to take a more proactive approach in monitoring for security to help ensure we are doing everything we can to help protect the personal and confidential information of our customers. A solution provided by Fiberlink was identified as being able to meet these needs and more. In searching for an endpoint security solution, one of the most important requirements that had to be met was that the provider needed to be device and platform agnostic. Fiberlink's MaaS360 (Mobility as a Service) platform gives AIC and its advisors that flexibility. After installing the Fiberlink application on a device, data is transmitted back to the MaaS360 portal. AIC can then use the portal to ensure that their advisor's have appropriate security in place. AIC can monitor for security features including antivirus software, firewalls and encryption. Fiberlink can also capture an inventory of computer hardware and software. This is important for identifying data backup and recovery solutions. AIC financial advisors can also leverage Fiberlink's "remote kill" feature that can be used to erase a device that has been lost or stolen. There were a number of challenges faced in getting Fiberlink approved. AIC advisors greatly value their independence and their own privacy, and to require them to install an application on their machines was viewed as an intrusion of their privacy. It took a significant effort to position this solution as a value-add offering.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

With the pervasiveness of malware and identity theft, it's now more important than ever to combat such threats by utilizing technology that helps identify potential risks as quickly as those risks can be identified.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETE?

No

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

AIC conducted a pilot with Fiberlink in December of 2009 through February of 2010. After results were collected (Appendix 1) AIC identified several areas that could be improved. A number of devices that were used for pilot purposes were missing security features such as antivirus and encryption. AIC worked directly with the owners of those devices to get appropriate solutions in place. After completion of the pilot it was readily apparent that having an extra set of eyes monitoring for security was highly beneficial. Some advisors rely on office staff or subcontracted computer

technicians to maintain their machines and in some cases this may not be sufficient. In one situation a device was identified as having antivirus software but the definitions were out of date by more than a year. After working with the computer engineer from that office it turned out the machine contained corrupted files preventing the virus definitions file to be updated from their antivirus server. Had it not been for AIC's use of the Fiberlink software this problem may have gone undetected for quite some time leaving this device more exposed to cyber threats. Hackers often target vulnerabilities in widely used applications such as Adobe Acrobat, Flash, Internet Explorer and Microsoft Office. One way to help prevent these attacks is to ensure that the latest patches are installed on the device. Another area of focus during the pilot was to identify machines that were missing critical OS (Operating System) patches. It was determined that several machines were missing critical patches even though they were set up to receive automatic updates. AIC was able to work with those individuals and make them aware of the issue. The benefits of Fiberlink go beyond that of the advisor. It has been identified by AIC as the most effective tool in helping to mitigate risks in a highly decentralized environment. Firms who utilize manual and non-technological ways to help mitigate such risks will likely prove inefficient and costly. Another benefit to AIC in conducting the Fiberlink pilot was the realization that there was a greater need in building overall awareness around information security. A security training program was developed in conjunction to the Fiberlink deployment to better educate AIC's registered representatives.

IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE? Yes. This project is innovative in that AIC believes it is the first insurance broker dealer to monitor independent advisors computer security through a solution like Fiberlink. In addition, this project can also be considered a best practice as it will likely prove to be the most effective, efficient, and affordable means of mitigating security risks for our financial advisors. As demand for consumer driven products like the iPad and Droid increases they will eventually make their way into the business space. Organizations will have to figure out how monitor and manage the security across multiple devices. Solutions like Fiberlink that are multiplatform compatible will allow businesses to give their associates a greater freedom of choice on what device they wish to use. Being able to remotely manage device not connected to



corporate networks (in real time) will give firms an opportunity to support their mobile workforce.

ADDITIONAL PROJECT INFORMATION: Risk management is becoming more and more strategic, especially for financial services companies. Firms will be required because of potential financial loss, reputational risks, and regulatory pressure to implement risk mitigation activities. As those strategic views begin to emerge, there may develop a need to control more of the process rather than passively monitor. Fiberlink also offers an upgraded version of their Visibility software called the Control agent. The Control agent is used to push out OS patching and other updates as well as enforce a stricter set of policies. Control is often used in the enterprise space. With Control agent the broker dealer can add an extra layer of enforcement including restricting how advisors connect to the internet. This allows for flexibility in the event of additional regulation and responsibility being placed on the firms that supervise financial advisors. Control agent can also provide application blacklisting, helpful to block software deemed high risk like P2P apps. An evaluation is currently being conducted on feasibility of the Control agent for use by AIC advisors. It is also worth mentioning that through Fiberlink's software, AIC can deliver a host of managed services to the advisor. Fiberlink offers managed encryption, managed firewalls, data backup and recovery by Iron Mountain and data leak prevention. If an advisor is in need of an encryption solution AIC can deliver that virtually as an add-on service. During the evaluation period in late 2009 and early 2010, two other providers AIC identified as suitable alternatives to Fiberlink were acquired by other firms. LANrev was purchased by Absolute Software and Gideon Technologies was acquired by Symantec. Cisco recently announced their endpoint security solution called AnyConnect.