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Glyndŵr University selects CounterACT to eliminate network security threats and dramatically reduce workload for IT team

Enhanced network utilisation and less copyright infringement notices are other key benefits of ForeScout deployment

“We used to encounter a whole range of malware attacks, including the likes of Conficker, and when students’ devices didn’t work they blamed our network! Since using CounterACT, we’ve suffered no malware attacks at all.”

Rob Stockton,
Head of IT Services at
Glyndŵr University

Objective

Authentication of students logging in to the network, from the first time they enrol, and protection from malware, viruses and zero-day threats. A failsafe, transparent NAC solution was also required, to ensure students would have uninterrupted access to the internet.

Solution

Evolve provided Glyndŵr with ForeScout CounterACT, providing full authentication; complete visibility of all device types, including Xbox gaming consoles and unwanted printer port use; continuous security posture-checking; and endpoint remediation.

Results

A secure campus network: malware issues have been virtually eliminated since CounterACT’s deployment in September 2011. Better network resource utilisation and fewer copyright infringement notices, as CounterACT can identify unwanted applications and helps to limit peer-to-peer file-sharing applications (such as film and music download sites). Dramatic reduction of workload for the IT team, facilitating annual cost savings of around £4,500. Based in Wrexham, and with campuses and facilities around North East Wales, Glyndŵr University champions the spirit of enterprise and an outward-facing philosophy. Inspired by Welsh hero Owain Glyndŵr a figurehead

of Welsh nationalism the University aims to be bold, inspiring and enterprising in everything it does.

Glyndŵr’s courses are tailored to be relevant to industry and professional applications. It works closely with partners in business including Airbus, Rolls Royce and the BBC to ensure graduates get the skills they need to gain employment. The University also offers excellent conference facilities and works with businesses to provide staff training and development.

With roots going back to 1887, Glyndŵr University has a long history of providing higher education in the region, but with prestigious new centres having launched in 2011 it also has its sights firmly set on the future.

Summary

In 2011, when its Bluesocket controllers were coming to the end of their life, Glyndŵr University decided it was time to find a new network security product, one with wide-ranging functionality. Specific requirements included: the ability to manage and control the network serving its student accommodation blocks on the main campus in Wrexham (comprising a total of 800 beds); the ability to facilitate authentication, in order to check students were who they said they were when logging in to the network; as well as capability



to manage the wide variety of endpoints brought on to the network by students, including laptops (Windows and Apple operating systems); smartphones and other handheld devices, and Xbox game consoles. Keeping out malware and viruses was also a critical requirement.

Why ForeScout?

Glyndŵr University contacted Evolve, a respected IT solution provider that evaluated the situation before recommending ForeScout CounterACT knowing it would resolve their specific network security issues. Glyndŵr also looked at Bradford Network's Campus Manager, but on realising they would need to buy and install Cisco switches to deploy this NAC solution, decided it would be too expensive. In contrast, ForeScout CounterACT requires no costly infrastructure changes or equipment upgrades, which was a key influencing factor in the purchasing process. Following a successful proof on concept conducted by Evolve, a ForeScout Gold Partner; the University rolled out the solution into the full production environment.

Further, Glyndŵr was delighted by the strong customer support provided by Evolve and ForeScout. **Rob Stockton, Head of IT Services** at Glyndŵr University, commented, "When we initially trialled CounterACT we experienced exceptional levels of support from ForeScout, including phone calls with their developers in Israel to promptly solve an issue with concurrent logons. Such dedication and customer service is unusual, and was a nice surprise for us."

How ForeScout helped Reduced IT team workload

The deployment of CounterACT has dramatically reduced the workload of Glyndŵr's IT team. They are saving one man day per week, which equates to annual cost savings of around £4,500.

Rob Stockton said, "It just works so well and as promised. Since installing CounterACT, we can't remember the last time we had to visit the student halls to fix an IT problem!"

Less copyright infringement notices

The number of copyright infringement notices received by Glyndŵr University has been significantly reduced, due to CounterACT's ability to identify unwanted applications, send warning notices and limit peer-to-peer file-sharing applications, including film and music download sites.

Enhanced resource utilisation

Since CounterACT can monitor all devices, applications and connections, the University is able to monitor and control access and use of network resources and can pre-empt inappropriate use and consumption. Rob Stockton added, "The level of integration and flexibility with policy settings allows for phenomenal control."

Reduced incident response expenditure

Rob Stockton commented, "We used to encounter a whole range of malware attacks, including the likes of Conficker, and when students' devices didn't work they blamed our network! Since using CounterACT, we've suffered no malware attacks at all."

Endpoint remediation

When a non-compliant endpoint is detected by CounterACT, it is stopped from accessing Glyndŵr's network and is redirected to a virtual firewall. At this point, the IT helpdesk will contact the user and advise them what they need to do to make the endpoint compliant - e.g. anti-virus or patch update after which they will be granted full network access.

The ForeScout difference

Rob Stockton, Head of IT Services at Glyndŵr University, summarised the main benefits of ForeScout CounterACT,

and what sets it apart from competitors in the NAC market, "The appliance has given us incredible levels of visibility and security information, in terms of seeing the type and number of devices on our network at any one time. The fact we can use CounterACT to identify certain hardware being used by students, such as Xbox's, and to create specific policies and filters according to device type is also extremely useful. Now we have CounterACT, we would not want to be without it, as it provides a level of network protection we never thought possible."

About Evolve Secure Solutions

Evolve Secure Solutions Ltd is a specialist provider of storage, security and infrastructure services and solutions to enterprises. Founded by individuals with over a decades experience within the IT industry, Evolve deliver a proven and innovative portfolio of products and services to leading UK corporate customers within financial and professionals services, retail and manufacturing.

With a core of top level vendor accreditation and strong delivery processes based on Prince 2 and ITIL best practice, Evolve has established long standing relationships with its clients to help deliver high value IT solutions. To help its clients meet the challenges of modern business process and to improve flexibility, Evolve has an extensive solutions portfolio that can be delivered via the use of on-site IT, hosted applications and remotely managed services.

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