



CASE STUDY

Fitchburg State University Leverages Cygilant's SOCVue Security Monitoring to Build a Comprehensive Security and Compliance Program

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Challenge

Fitchburg State University was in the process of executing a 5-year Security Plan to align the university with comprehensive IT security and compliance goals, such as PCI DSS, state regulations, and industry best practice initiatives. It was missing an effective security event management solution that could provide alerts and information as well as important insights about the IT environment as a whole.

Solution

Fitchburg State University chose SOCVue® Security Monitoring from hybrid security-as-a-service pioneer Cygilant to provide 24/7/365 security monitoring of its IT environment by Cygilant's highly trained security professionals, while offering threat detection, analysis and notification of event data, proactive remediation guidance, and compliance auditing.

Results

With SOCVue now an integral part of Fitchburg State University's security plan, its IT team has been able to establish an enterprise-class proactive security and compliance program and experience a multitude of cybersecurity benefits it never had before, all at a fraction of the cost of alternate solutions.



“As far as I’m concerned, the Cygilant services are more intuitive than the other products we’ve reviewed. It’s absolutely the best value and IT investment to make!”

Sherry Horeanopoulos, Information Security Officer, Fitchburg State University

The Education Industry Is Under Cyber Attack

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Education institutions hold a whole host of sensitive information that cybercriminals are eager to get their hands on so it's no wonder the number of educational data breaches has increased dramatically over the years. According the 2016 Verizon Data Breach Report, there were 254 confirmed data breaches in the education industry and according to research by the Ponemon Institute, the average cost per stolen record is \$246! Can you imagine just how much of a financial loss it would be if your institution was hit by a successful cyber attack and you suffered major data loss?

Well that's precisely one of the questions Fitchburg State University was asking itself while discussing its plans to expand and enhance its security programs. Fitchburg State University was in the process of executing a 5-year Security Plan to align the university with comprehensive security and compliance goals, such as PCI DSS, state regulations, and industry best practice initiatives, during which it concluded it needed to take its security and compliance posture to the next level in order to defend against the growing threat landscape. It was missing an effective security event management solution that could provide alerts and important insights about the IT environment as well as a way to effortlessly meet the complex compliance regulations it needed to strictly follow. With this mission in mind, Sherry Horeanopoulos, the Information Security Officer at Fitchburg State University who handles all aspects of information security for the university, was tasked with finding the solution to this challenge.

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Sherry Horeanopoulos

Finding the Best Security Solution

Horeanopoulos belongs to an ISO Council for private and public state college and university Information Security Officers. In the course of the council meetings, one of the main topics pertained to what products and services the various institutions were utilizing to accomplish their security and compliance goals. A fellow colleague from the UMass system recommended that she check out the hybrid security-as-a-service solutions offered by Cygilant.

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Shortly after investigating the SOCVue service, Horeanopoulos was convinced that Cygilant was the right security investment for Fitchburg State University. “As far as I’m concerned, the Cygilant service is more intuitive than the other products we’ve reviewed. It’s absolutely the best value and IT investment to make! In combination with the SOCVue Security Monitoring service, we’re leveraging our in-house resources along with Cygilant’s to achieve the greatest possible outcome for our needs,” said Horeanopoulos.

Defining the Security Goals

Most organizations maintain a similar mindset when considering their security goals and focus on the security of their environment and data. While Fitchburg State mirrors this sentiment, Horeanopoulos wanted to take the focus even one step further and strive to be proactive, rather than reactive, which is how many IT teams unfortunately operate these days. “We want our constituents (students and employees) to feel confident that the university is keeping their data and information protected to the best of our ability. We want our network and data center compliant with data-protection standards, while maintaining business conditions that allow our students and professors to accomplish their goals in teaching and learning without difficulty,” said Horeanopoulos.



It was very easy to add devices to be monitored. Where there were more complicated clusters or services to be added, the Cygilant SDM provided help and expertise during the entire process. It was such a very easy implementation process.

Sherry Horeanopoulos

Quick Implementation Followed by Powerful Results

“We installed and implemented the SOCVue Security Monitoring service within our network in half a day with a Service Delivery Manager (SDM) from Cygilant, one System Admin from the university and myself. It was very easy to add devices to be monitored. Where there were more complicated clusters or services to be added, the Cygilant SDM provided help and expertise during the entire process. It was such a very easy implementation process,” stated Horeanopoulos.

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“In an Information Security department of only two professionals, we greatly rely upon the relationship we’ve built with Cygilant’s SOC team to keep us on our toes. They thoroughly review the events occurring in our network on a daily (and sometimes hourly) basis, helping to define those occurrences that should concern us, saving us the time of having to devote hours and hours to sift through events and logs in-house. Our dedicated Service Delivery Manager knows our network and environment and can report on it confidently. We’re always on a path to move forward and don’t have to continually repeat what has been done in the past. This allows us to stay agile and keep refining our system to meet our goals if they need to change for any reason. Yes, we spent money for this support, but it’s nowhere near what we’d spend for a full-time, in-house employee to handle our log management and SIEM needs,” said Horeanopoulos.



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Benefiting from Cygilant’s SOCVue Security Monitoring

For many of our customers, Cygilant’s SOCVue Security Monitoring service is the solution that keeps on giving. It provides powerful benefits that dramatically help organizations with labor-intensive and time consuming IT tasks. When asked what the 3 major benefits are that she receives from the SOCVue Security Monitoring service, Horeanopoulos replied:

1. “Leveraging Cygilant’s 24/7/365 SOC team enables our department to overcome limited resources to gain valuable knowledge about our network activity and data center, which allows us to proceed with confidence to improve our security and compliance posture in an educational environment.”
2. “It’s vitally important for us, in a university setting, to understand what is happening in our network so that we can provide comprehensive digital and electronic services (with as few limits as possible) for students and educators. We cannot prevent access; we have to secure it. Having a complete view of what happens in our campus’ network, easily allows us to safely offer the services we are required to provide as well as maintain our strict compliance standards we adhere to.”
3. “Knowledge of our environment allows the SOC team to provide information filtered to our needs, so we’re able to react efficiently and immediately if necessary.”

Advice from One Education Organization to Another

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Colleges and universities usually have to be very conservative with budgeting and cannot arbitrarily raise tuition and fees for already financially stressed students. To make matters more challenging, IT staff cannot always be “specialists” either – they must wear several hats within their department and perform a variety of functions in order to survive. Therefore, having an affordably priced and effective security service to handle some of the workload is an invaluable asset for any organization to leverage.

“Unless you’re lucky enough to have the resources to devote an employee to monitoring, refining, reporting, and triaging the issues being aggregated by your SIEM application, then I suggest you use this service! Even if you just try a 1-year contract initially, I highly recommend you take advantage of Cygilant’s SOCVue Security Monitoring service. With Cygilant’s help you’ll be able to refine your IT infrastructure and get it to a place where you can manage it more effectively than before, saving yourself valuable time and money,” concluded Horeanopoulos.

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How Can Cygilant Help You?

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Having a clear view into your company's network activity is one of the core foundations of a strong security posture. The ability to monitor the level of traffic devices are experiencing and what actions are being performed and by whom is a vital component of discovering abnormalities in your network. Effective network security monitoring allows IT security professionals to detect both external and internal behavior patterns and take immediate action before suffering a cyber attack. Lastly, ensuring that your organization is completely secure, specifically when it comes to log management, SIEM, network security monitoring, and meeting compliance requirements, is important for those in industries with strict compliance regulations. Cygilant's [SOCVue Security Monitoring](#) service includes 24/7/365 security monitoring of your environment by Cygilant's highly trained security professionals. The Cygilant Security Operations Center (SOC) team will analyze event data from across your IT assets and provide timely notification of any security incidents along with remediation guidance. The Cygilant SOC team filters thousands of events down to a snapshot view in the SOCVue Portal so you can see the status of your current security posture, allowing you to quickly determine what needs your attention.

About Fitchburg State University

Fitchburg State University, located in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, is a public institution dedicated to integrating high-quality professional programs with strong liberal arts and sciences studies. Founded in 1894, the university now has more than 30 undergraduate programs and 22 master's degree programs, and 7,000 full and part-time students. For more information, visit: <http://www.fitchburgstate.edu>.

About Cygilant

Cygilant, a pioneer in **hybrid security as a service**, is transforming how mid-market organizations build enterprise-class security programs. Acting as an extension of our customers' IT teams, Cygilant provides continuous security operations based on best-of-breed technology at a fraction of the cost of alternate solutions. Cygilant is a trusted advisor to organizations that need to improve their IT security and compliance posture and protect against cyber threats and vulnerabilities.

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