WatchGuard solution provides transparency and visibility into Anthem College's nationwide network

Providing quality post-secondary education for more than a century, Anthem College prepares students for graduation with flexible, career-focused programs. Anthem College is comprised of eight brands and 34 campuses across the United States as well as Anthem Online. They currently support 2,300 staff and over 12,000 students.

Situation

With 43 total sites across the U.S., including 34 physical campuses and several large data centers, Anthem College's IT network was complex and challenging to manage. Different programs utilized specialty-based applications and they were undergoing continual program expansion. Consolidation into one centralized system was a top priority for Anthem College to be able to quickly configure and manage their devices and appliances at each location.

"With the previous manufacturer we were using, we didn't have the ability to deploy these appliances centrally or manage them centrally and that presented a pretty big challenge to the Anthem IT Department in being able to keep pace with the organization," said Aaron Anderson, Vice President, Information Technology, Anthem College.

Customer:
Anthem College

Website:
anthem.edu

Industry:
Education

Region:
United States

Size:
12,000 Students
34 Campuses

Product:
WatchGuard XTM 530
WatchGuard XTM 820
WatchGuard XTMV
WatchGuard Dimension™

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Aaron Anderson, Vice President, Information Technology, Anthem College

At any given time, their system needed to administer up to 15,000 users, providing access to course materials and online resources critical to their student's success. With such a large user group, system stability was crucial for students and staff. Anthem College looked to maintain a high Service Level Agreement (SLA), giving users access at all times. With an increasing student population and plans to expand, high demand on bandwidth had become a pressing issue, with noticeable slowdowns during peak times such as testing periods. "My biggest challenge is providing 99% uptime for all of our users internally and externally," said Anderson.

Security was also a constant concern for the safety of their environment and in order to maintain compliance, as Anthem College has both intellectual property and Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliance to protect.

An uncontrolled environment had the potential to disrupt educational instruction for students across the country. "A user could open an infected attachment and impact the entire network; or that could produce and send data that is private to our organization," said Anderson.

The organization had been running Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) and struggled with a lack of network visibility and control. Anthem College needed the ability to respond to security threats, meet increased demands on bandwidth, and fulfill ever evolving user needs.

Solution

Anthem College explored options to centralize their system and boost the organization's agility. Having experienced WatchGuard products in the past, Anthem College knew they could deliver top quality and performance, while offering competitive pricing.

Together with SL Powers, an Expert WatchGuard reseller, Anthem College rolled out XTM530 security appliances in most campuses, XTM820's in bigger locations such as datacenters, and the XTMV virtualized security platform at their largest data center location. Anthem College included LiveSecurity to provide software support, extended hardware warranty and security alerts. The seamless deployment of their WatchGuard solution resulted in rapid conversion time.

"Compared to what we had planned, what actually happened for the deployment was amazing in my eyes. Switching from an MPLS to a direct internet access circuit with a WatchGuard device was a lot faster and we were able to convert our campuses with probably two to three ping loss, which is almost unheard of," said Jeff Crossley, Systems Engineer, Anthem College.

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Rory Sanchez, President and CEO, SL Powers

Utilizing the expertise of SL Powers to implement the system and provide ongoing support ensures quick response time for any issues and easy maintenance of the system long-term, while still enjoying WatchGuard's world-class functionality.

"WatchGuard definitely leads the industry in ease of management, features and affordability. WatchGuard puts a lot of features into their appliances and solutions that achieve results that, in the past, required lots of different things in order to accomplish. Combining those and giving you one platform to work on not only reduces your cost of deployment, but also the cost of managing that solution long term," said Rory Sanchez, President and CEO, SL Powers.

Anthem College has also implemented WatchGuard Dimension in order to increase visibility into network data and gain insight into potential security threats. Rich reporting functionality and real-time monitoring allows for informed decisions on policy deployment and risk management. With one central dashboard to manage their locations across the country, Anthem College can easily find traffic patterns and better understand how bandwidth is being consumed.

WatchGuard's solution has offered them centrally located and in-house control at their fingertips. "Before we could not control a lot of the connectivity between our campuses, it was always handled by the ISP, whereas now it's in-house and we can actually control who does what and route any information we need based off the WatchGuard device," said Crossley.

Benefits

Up to 10x bandwidth offers greater organizational agility and opportunity for growth

As soon as the WatchGuard solution installation was complete, system engineers noticed significant bandwidth was immediately freed up. In addition, with better control over their system, Anthem College now has the ability to filter out wasteful data usage, increasing bandwidth even more. According to Crossley, "Over the past 12 to 18 months our bandwidth has increased at each campus level at least five to ten times what it was."

More bandwidth has improved the end-user experience for students, who no longer experience a slowdown during high traffic periods. There is also the opportunity expand to add more users as Anthem College continues to grow, despite increasing network requirements.

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Improved scalability enables Anthem College to more quickly respond to market demand, deploy new programs, new course offerings, and new locations to prepare more students to succeed.

Centralized dashboard offers real-time visibility and rapid policy deployment

Consolidating their siloed systems into one manageable platform and installing WatchGuard Dimension has allowed greater visibility into Anthem College's network. Prior to implementing the WatchGuard solution, several products were needed to accomplish the equivalent service offered in their new dashboard. Administrators can now use Dimension to better understand user-behavior and consumption patterns, and pinpoint security and performance issues.

"I look at the central dashboard every day. It is up on my screen and it gives me real-time visibility or near-time visibility to the bandwidth usage at each one of our 43 sites," said Anderson.

WatchGuard's single platform creates a one-stop shop for system engineers, who can now centrally deploy policies quickly and effectively for locations nationwide, reducing travel time and IT costs. Adding new devices and setting up new locations is simpler than ever and requires less time.

"Centralized policy management gives us the ability to make a change and deploy it to each one of the locations that may have an impact at the click of a button," said Anderson.

Increased security protection and transparency for easy compliance

Since implementing WatchGuard's XTM Solution and Dimension for security intelligence, Anthem College has increased transparency into their network, stopping security threats that had created concern. Previously, Anthem College had experienced problems with students trying to visit proxy sites, which administrators can now easily limit with improved control over their network. From the central dashboard, staff can ensure desktops accessing the network are secure and protect vulnerable data from being exposed.

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Aaron Anderson, Vice President, Information Technology, Anthem College

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The WatchGuard solution gives Anthem College the transparency and data needed to provide as evidence for potential audits. This gives ease of mind to the school that all compliance needs are met.

The biggest impact for Anthem College has been the ability to respond. With WatchGuard's solution in place, they can respond to security threats, increasing demands, and ever-evolving user needs.

"I'm very happy with the decision we made on the WatchGuard rollout, it's been very effective, very stable and very robust at the same time" said Anderson.

About WatchGuard

WatchGuard® Technologies, Inc. is a global leader of integrated, multi-function business security solutions that intelligently combine industry standard hardware, Best-of-Breed security features, and policy-based management tools. WatchGuard provides easy-to-use, but enterprise-powerful protection to hundreds of thousands of businesses worldwide. WatchGuard products are backed by WatchGuard LiveSecurity® Service, an innovative support program. WatchGuard is headquartered in Seattle, Wash. with offices throughout North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, and Latin America. To learn more, visit WatchGuard.com.

SMART SECURITY

1-800-734-9905

americasinfo@watchguard.com
505 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98104
www.watchguard.com