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Steve Scott
Information Security Manager
SCHS



St. Charles Health System (SCHS) - Committed to Protecting Sensitive Information of its Patients, Physicians, and Employees

St. Charles Health System (SCHS) is a healthcare delivery system comprised of three hospitals and some twenty clinics located in Central Oregon. With nearly 3,000 caregivers, SCHS provides a full range of medical specialties and services.

Choosing CynergisTek and Code Green Networks

In early 2009, SCHS's CIO and IT department undertook a Baseline Security Risk Assessment since the organization had not conducted an independent, third party evaluation of their security posture in the past. Based upon a recommendation, they engaged CynergisTek, an authority in healthcare information security management consulting services and solutions. As part of their engagement, CynergisTek organized a two week Data Loss Risk Assessment, using the Code Green Networks CI-1500 Data Loss Prevention (DLP) appliance.

Data Loss Risk Assessment

The assessment consisted of installing the Code Green DLP appliance in a passive mode to monitor network transmissions for sensitive data. “Within literally minutes of the appliance being plugged in, we started collecting data. Once we saw items that could become major issues for us, we were able to remediate potential problems right away,” said Steve Scott, Information Security Manager.

The deliverable from the assessment is a thorough report of findings highlighting areas of potential concern. “Because of the Code Green tool, we were able to identify issues and correct them before stringent breach notification laws were put into effect,” said Scott.

After reviewing the results, SCHS's IT team became aware that there were two major communication channels that required immediate attention:

1. One of SCHS's hospital information system vendors had set up a secure point-to-point FTP channel over which the two companies would communicate. However, the vendor misconfigured the system. As a result, data was actually being sent out via the Internet instead of over the secure channel.
2. Various business associates (e.g. coders, insurers) were processing sensitive data and emailing it back to SCHS using unencrypted clear text messages.

When CynergisTek and Code Green Networks presented the findings, SCHS immediately addressed the areas of concern.

Implementing the Complete Data Loss Prevention Solution

Based on the successful Data Loss Risk Assessment and their experience gained with the Code Green TrueDLP solution, SCHS decided to implement the complete solution for on-going monitoring, blocking and discovery. They elected to purchase and deploy two Code Green CI-3000 Content Inspection Appliances to provide DLP protection for all of their facilities.

The appliances arrived preloaded with a wide range of HIPAA code set and healthcare EDI protocol identifiers, and preconfigured policies, including: ICD-9, LOINC®, NDC, SNOMED CT®, HCPCS, HL7 and X12. St. Charles Health System simply needed to register their sensitive data/documents and then activate one or more of the preloaded policy and reporting templates to begin detecting sensitive healthcare data leaks over the network.

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Steve Scott, Information Security Manager SCHS

“The appliances were easy to set-up and configure,” said Steve Scott. “They worked just as advertised. We were up and running in an hour with the basic information in place to begin monitoring our systems.”

Although SCHS already had policies in place regarding the handling of sensitive data, it wasn’t until after implementing the Code Green Networks DLP solution that they had the ability to effectively enforce these regulations.

“Our strategy is about educating employee and business associates’ behavior through the policies we’ve set-up. We use Code Green Networks to supervise and reinforce the behavior,” said Scott. “Since implementing this data loss prevention solution, we find people are much more careful with the organization’s sensitive data. Having this tool enables us to not be the IT Police. We can give functionality back to our users knowing that our data is being properly handled and protected.”

Minimal IT time is needed to maintain the system. According to Scott, responding to alerts and refining policies, as management identifies new data to be registered, is all that’s required from him and his team. He finds himself spending less than 30 minutes a day with the system. The discovery feature of the Code Green Networks DLP solution has allowed SCHS to find and identify sensitive data stored on shared drives and desktops.

“We have found that people have legitimate sensitive information in areas they don’t even know about,” said Scott. “Once we discover this data we immediately move it into an encrypted area and then work with the owner to see if it’s something to be stored or removed.”

Next Steps

In January 2010, SCHS will install the Code Green Networks Agent on 3,000 computers that currently have disabled USB ports. This upgrade will allow SCHS to control and encrypt the sensitive information being copied to removable media and restrict the use to authorized users and devices. “We are excited about the agent because it will allow us to finally open up the USB ports without being concerned about sensitive data being handled inappropriately.”

Scott said that he was incredibly pleased with the overall solution as it works “just as advertised.” He added that the support that he receives from both Code Green Networks and CynergisTek is “stellar.”

St. Charles Health System is extremely committed to protecting the sensitive information of its patients, physicians, and employees. The organization continues to assess and refine their security infrastructure to ensure that this data is protected from accidental or malicious activity.



About CynergisTek, Inc.

CynergisTek is a leading provider of information security management, regulatory compliance, IT audit and advisory services. The firm offers practical, manageable and affordable consulting services for organizations of all sizes and complexity. Using an organized, planned and collaborative approach, CynergisTek applies multidisciplinary expertise to serve as partner and mentor, to enhance the consulting experience and, ultimately, clients’ compliance and business performance. CynergisTek participates in and contributes to HIMSS, AHIMA, HFMA, HCCA, AHIA and other industry bellwether organizations.

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About Code Green Networks

Code Green Networks delivers affordable data loss prevention solutions that protect private employee and customer information, and safeguard intellectual property across all electronic communications channels. The company’s fast-to-deploy, easy-to-manage content inspection appliances and agents rapidly detect and prevent potential data leaks, helping organizations automate compliance and mitigate risks from internal breaches. A typical installation takes less than a day.

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