Customer Success Story

The Company

United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU) is a member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative institution that serves the financial needs of the United Nations staff, UN Specialized Agencies and former international civil servants and their families, globally. Founded by UN staff members in 1947 to meet the needs of newly relocated employees, UNFCU currently provides services to members currently located in 210 countries, spanning 30 different languages.

Dean Frustaci, Information Security Engineer at UNFCU, serves as a senior member of the company’s five-person security team charged with protecting the organization’s IT infrastructure and applications – and preparing for security audits conducted in observance of regulations including the PCI Data Security Standard, among others.

As part of that work, Frustaci and his team have also been directly responsible for the development and maintenance of IT security controls and procedures related to the continued expansion of UNFCU’s facilities worldwide, in particular the construction of the company’s headquarters in Long Island City, New York, directly across the East River from the United Nations Secretariat Building.

Solution Summary

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<th>CUSTOMER TYPE</th>
<th>Financial Services/Banking</th>
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<td>CHALLENGE</td>
<td>Advancing vulnerability management initiatives to minimize IT risk and meet compliance demands.</td>
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<td>SOLUTION</td>
<td>CORE Impact® Pro, the first comprehensive penetration testing software solution for assessing organizations’ most significant IT vulnerabilities and information security threats.</td>
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“It’s been very rewarding to develop our internal testing programs as Core Security continues to advance Impact Pro; we’ve grown right along with the product. We always knew the inherent value that testing brought to security, but we’ve expanded our focus as the product has evolved and it’s helping us meet needs today that we weren’t even thinking about several years ago.”

The Challenge

As with any other financial services institution, UNFCU faces a broad range of IT security challenges as it works to keep its electronic operations up-and-running and protect its valuable data, all while maintaining compliance with the long list of industry and government regulations that it must adhere to, including PCI DSS.

And while UNFCU has long worked to remain proactive and address its IT risk through the deployment of many layers of defensive mechanisms, along with embracing proactive vulnerability management, the organization needed a more efficient way to test its resiliency and compliance, as well as to filter through the mountains of data produced by its many security and vulnerability management systems.

From complying with specific elements of industry regulations to securing the development of its new facility, and ensuring that its end users are not mistakenly exposing the company to external threats, UNFCU needed an automated penetration testing solution that met its diverse security assessment and compliance automation requirements.

The Solution

To help filter through its voluminous network vulnerability scanner results, test Web applications and conduct required internal penetration tests, UNFCU decided to license CORE Impact Pro to conduct more frequent, proactive security assessments and embed the testing process broadly across its entire IT security practice.

Over the past five years, as Frustaci and his colleagues on the IT security team have gained more experienced using the product and tapped into the many new features that were incorporated during UNFCU’s deployment of the solution, the organization has vastly improved the efficiency of its overall vulnerability management program and extended penetration testing practices throughout many of its other initiatives.

From the ongoing testing of its IT security infrastructure, which was being installed even as its headquarters was being constructed, to examining its data security and Web applications security programs over time, UNFCU has continued to add new layers of testing. The institution also plans to explore new areas of assessment in the future, such as end user social engineering testing.
By increasingly leveraging Impact Pro across its operations over a number of years, the company maintains that it has seen significant improvements in its overall efficiency, from translating scanner results into actionable remediation data to running internal tests mandated under PCI. Instead of hiring consultants, now UNFCU has the capability right at its fingertips.

“We’ve truly integrated penetration testing into our process and even now we know we’re still just scratching the surface of what we can accomplish,” said Frustaci. “Using Impact Pro we’re constantly moving the process forward and hitting new vectors; before we had the product we would do some rudimentary internal testing and bring in consultants, but now we’re doing a lot of the testing inhouse and spending less on third-party engagements.”

“Adding Impact Pro to the process allows us to better understand risks and to do additional testing after remediation to make sure that everything went as planned,” said Frustaci. “Qualys provides us with the generic scan, then we use Impact Pro to investigate any irregularities that we come across.”

Carrying Out Mandated Tests

As an organization required to comply with the PCI DSS security standard, among others, UNFCU is mandated to carry out penetration tests whenever it makes a significant change to its network infrastructure, specifically under Chapter 11.3 of the guidelines.

While traditionally the company has relied on external consultants to perform such assessments, the Credit Union is now using Impact Pro to conduct tests on a more frequent basis to remain in compliance with PCI DSS and lower its overhead costs in relation to consulting engagements.

“We use Impact Pro as part of a layered approach to compliance; we of course have the actual need for pen testing under Requirement 11.3, but we find that the real sweet spot for us is in using the product along with our Qualys scans, specifically via the PCI Connect program,” said Frustaci. “We typically run scans against what we know to be PCI-relevant servers where data lives and then verify those results with Impact Pro; doing this definitely allows us to be more aggressive in using all the data provided during the scans.”

Improving Security Awareness

Like many other organizations, UNFCU is increasingly interested in understanding where its risks lie related to potential social engineering attacks carried out against its end users.

As such, UNFCU is beginning to use the client-side testing features of Impact Pro to begin conducting internal exercises to gauge where it currently stands and how well existing security training programs are resonating with its employees.

“Impact Pro is a great testing mechanism to gauge the effectiveness of our end user training; we’re making an investment in these types of programs, and it’s critical to be able to support the affect it is having using hard data,” Frustaci said. “It allows us to find out where we are after conducting training, and demonstrate that spending the money on training works.”