Customer Success Story

The Company
University of North Florida

The University of North Florida (UNF) is a comprehensive public university in Jacksonville, Florida. Located 12 miles from downtown Jacksonville. UNF’s 1,300-acre campus features 26 major buildings and nearly three million square feet of space. The University enrolls 16,000 students, employs more than 400 full-time faculty, and is among the 30 largest employers in the greater Jacksonville area.

The Challenge

Jeff Durfee, Assistant Director, Information Security is a 15-year veteran of IT operations. He occupies the University’s first dedicated information security position, which requires a complex balancing act of maintaining the openness of the University’s network environment while enforcing the stringent security policies associated with enterprise networks. Soon after assuming this role, Durfee conducted a thorough inspection of the University’s security efforts and determined that they were largely fragmented.

Solution Summary

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<td>CHALLENGE</td>
<td>Be more proactive with network security</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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“We had no easy way to identify the impact of potential vulnerabilities,” said Durfee. “We spent a lot of time chasing false positives, and there was no readily available way of precisely identifying which resources on our network were truly vulnerable.”

A lot of events were taking place at the same time. There was an exponential growth in the number of servers and systems that were on campus, and it was rapidly getting to the point where one or two people could no longer casually check for vulnerabilities and try to make sure that things were secure.”

Durfee realized that the University needed to implement a proactive, efficient and repeatable process for identifying vulnerabilities on the network and determining their impact on operations while still maintaining the openness of his network. He immediately sought to address this need through a variety of open source tools. However, this process required the part-time efforts of Durfee and three members of his team. Durfee recalls that although these open-source tools were free to acquire, the additional staff required to run them proved costly.

“Our goal was to be more proactive, rather than reactive. We tried to implement a more formal method of testing machines to make sure that there were no glaring holes or obvious vulnerabilities. That’s when we began using open source tools, but that method rapidly proved to be unworkable. It was too difficult to train a number of people on the variety of tools we needed to test the network.”

However, the complicated, labor-intensive processes involved with running several tools at any one time limited them to infrequent testing. In an effort to fully integrate regular penetration testing into his security practice, Durfee began investigating other options. The University turned to CORE Security and selected its product CORE Impact Pro, the first comprehensive penetration testing product for assessing and verifying specific information security threats to an organization.

The Solution

CORE Impact allows organizations to replace manual penetration testing processes with a professional, state-of-the-art, penetration testing product. Network administrators and security engineers can therefore easily perform penetration tests to identify compromisable network assets and prove actual paths of attack that must be eliminated. Impact Pro reports precisely where a network could be penetrated while providing valuable information to support corrective actions.
The Result

CORE Impact Pro enabled Durfee to eliminate the time-consuming processes involved with coordinating multiple open source tools and finally achieve his goal of regular testing of the University’s many servers.

Impact also instantly transformed the penetration testing process for the University from a labor-intensive, patchwork practice of using disparate tools into a single, flexible and automated platform. Soon after adopting Impact Pro, Durfee and his team realized that they would require significantly fewer staff resources to conduct penetration tests.

“By taking control of the Penetration Testing process with CORE Impact, we can now test as often as we want. A major benefit for us is that we don’t have a whole bunch of tools to integrate. Anyone in our department can run CORE Impact and get comprehensive, accurate results. If Impact says vulnerability exists and it’s exploitable - we take those results as gospel.”

Durfee is now able to realize the benefits of managing the University’s penetration testing process internally. Unlike many higher education networks, which rely solely on outside consultants for infrequent penetration tests, Durfee is confident that he made the right decision to manage this process internally.

“With CORE Impact, you can immediately evaluate the impact of a change without having to wait for a consultant. Many universities depend on somebody to come in from the outside and take a snapshot, and they then have to remediate all those vulnerabilities. In the meantime, they have many months worth of new vulnerabilities that pop up before the next consultant visit. With CORE Impact, we can test as many times as we want with no additional cost.”

“We are very impressed with the frequency and quality of exploit updates for CORE Impact. With open source tools, you may never know for sure who you’re downloading exploits from, which results in a ‘buyer beware’ scenario. With Impact, there is frequently very little delay for new exploits. Other security products we use often don’t have their signatures updated as quickly.”

“CORE Impact has quickly become a key resource, enabling us to efficiently support the rapid growth of our IT department while improving our network security.”