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Terry Grogan
Lancaster General
Operations and Technical Services Director

Lancaster General Heals Security Ills With Juniper's SSL VPN Solution

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Customer:

Lancaster General, a non-profit hospital and healthcare system

Industry:

Healthcare

Challenge:

Secure access to critical patient data across highly disbursed hospital network

Solution:

Juniper Networks NetScreen SSL VPN solution

Benefits:

- Time savings due to ease-of-use
- Scalability allowing for more authorized users
- Increased network security through secure remote access
- HIPAA compliance

Lancaster General, located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is comprised of more than 25 healthcare organizations, including the Lancaster General Hospital, the Health Campus, the Women & Babies Hospital and the Medical Group.

With the Healthcare Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), healthcare providers are required to put rules and technologies in place to ensure that sensitive healthcare information remains secure and confidential. As a result, Lancaster General decided to update their network and to provide secure remote access to networked medical information for physicians, employees, vendors and students of its College of Nursing & Health Sciences.

In early 2000, Lancaster General selected a Microsoft Terminal Server remote access solution. Unfortunately, as the organization

and number of applications grew, they began to encounter a number of issues. The solution was expensive to maintain due to licensing fees. Additionally, users couldn't print information, nor could they copy files to their home machines – resulting in files being emailed which posed a security risk as potentially confidential data was exchanged over the Internet.

“We had it all figured out so that we could provide a great, necessary service for our physicians and nurses that would enable them to gain access to the information they needed at anytime, all while working within HIPAA's guidelines,” said Terry Grogan, operations and technical services director at Lancaster General. “However, what we didn't anticipate was how many technical problems we would encounter with our access solution.”



The Solution

While evaluating various ways to correct the problems created by their previous system, Grogan found the Juniper Networks NetScreen Secure Access appliances for remote access. She decided that this was worth investigating further.

The Juniper Networks NetScreen-SA 3000 Secure Sockets Layer-based (SSL) virtual private network (VPN) solution is a hardened network appliance that provides the benefits of traditional remote access technologies in a more secure, cost-effective manner. Lancaster General deployed, at headquarters, the NetScreen-SA 3000 in November 2002 as the organization's primary secure remote access solution. The appliance leverages SSL technology included with standard Web browsers, so there is no client software to buy or license and install.

The Benefits

With Juniper's SSL VPN solution, Grogan found a way to provide remote access, increase network and data security, comply with audit requirements and give access to Mac users, all at a reduced cost from the previous solution.

"I had certain expectations for the Juniper SSL VPN solution and Juniper exceeded them all," said Grogan. "Installing the Juniper solution was so fast and simple that I almost couldn't believe it actually worked, but we had 350 people sign up on the first day and, sure enough, it worked perfectly for all of them."

Today, due to increased scalability, Lancaster General is up to more than 1,500 authorized users and the door is open for more. Doctors, staff and students can now securely and easily access applications, such as physicians' research tools, the Lancaster General intranet – which includes HR benefits information and student course information – as well as access to all network file shares.

As one of the largest user groups, the College of Nursing & Health Sciences finds access controls very important. College users can access all of the network information they need for school, such as research materials, lectures and presentations. Through the control functionality, Grogan was able to establish on-campus access for students to retrieve only the hospital's clinical data and not sensitive patient information on the network. Offsite, students can access course schedules, lecture materials and any other documents instructors provide.

"Students don't need to access clinical data outside of Lancaster facilities," said Grogan. "We monitor the access of patient information very carefully to ensure that every step is taken to protect privacy and uphold the highest standards of care. The Juniper SSL VPN solution helps us with this endeavor."

Grogan also takes advantage of the other administrative options offered by the Juniper SSL VPN appliance, such as the timeout features and detailed audit logs of every user activity. Different groups have different timeout schedules. The detailed audit logs are used for HIPAA compliance, statistics on system usage and also provide a good mechanism of scheduling downtime on some systems by monitoring peak usage time.

While the number of users at Lancaster General continues to grow, Grogan has found a cost-effective remote access solution that meets her needs, as well as those of her demanding constituents.

"The Juniper SSL VPN appliance has saved us countless dollars and headaches, but it also has the capacity to really help our patients because their doctors can stay connected and can evaluate their progress frequently. The patient's level of care is what's important." Grogan adds, "At the end of the day, we're only here to serve the patient the best way possible. The Juniper SSL VPN solution is the tool that helps us in this important process."



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