The City of Petersburg Collaborates with Sophos, Setting New Standards in Municipal Cybersecurity

Incorporated in 1748 by the Virginia General Assembly, Petersburg has a rich historical legacy. Home to 33,000 residents, the town was the site of several key Civil War battles. Its local governing body, the City of Petersburg, supports 600 dedicated employees who provide services that span various domains, including taxes, public works, water, and sewer management.

As the city's Director of Information Technology, Gerrit VanVoorhees plays a pivotal role in implementing cybersecurity solutions to protect the government's growing infrastructure.

CUSTOMER-AT-A-GLANCE

City of Petersburg

Industry
Local Municipal Government

Number of Users
Over 600

Sophos Solutions
Sophos Intercept X Advanced Endpoint
Sophos Intercept X Advanced for Server
Sophos Remote Ethernet Devices (RED)
Sophos Central

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VanVoorhees, Director of Information Technology

Challenges

‣ Consolidating multiple networks across the city in a single Active Directory network

‣ Providing secure network performance and connectivity for branch offices

‣ Reducing costs and improving management efficiency

What happens when your primary firewall isn't enough?

With the city for nearly eight years, VanVoorhees noticed some concerning problems in its existing security systems. The city's IT team relied heavily on Fortinet products, with periodic upgrades, which became the backbone of their firewall protection. After transitioning to Comcast Metro Ethernet, which connected all government buildings, the city was down to just one primary firewall for the entire municipality. The next challenge was consolidating disparate networks—such as the fire department and police department in the city—into a single Microsoft Active Directory network. In addition, VanVoorhees wanted to build redundancy, so he started evaluating other solutions.

Furthermore, he knew the city needed an integrated solution, preferably one that would support Active Directory. Existing solutions offered connections that were slow, and, with an expenditure of $450 per building for security and networking, costs were mounting. "Having different networks without a centralized system was like trying to steer multiple boats going in different directions. We needed something to bring it all together," VanVoorhees explained. "We were relying on an old system for too long. With a rapidly changing digital landscape, we knew we had to step up our game."

How does a city government go about evaluating vendors?

In its quest for a robust security solution, the City of Petersburg reviewed various vendors. The IT team initiated a rigorous research process, followed by soliciting multiple bids from different vendors. Their objectives were clear: a faster, more affordable solution without compromising security. The IT Director noted: "Our vendor evaluation wasn't just about finding the cheapest option; it was about ensuring we had a solution tailored to our needs."

How did Sophos stand out amid multiple security solutions?

After doing its due diligence, the city decided to adopt Sophos, which was both cost-effective and provided a fully integrated, scalable solution.

The Sophos Remote Ethernet Device (RED) replaced the city's existing 10MB connection, meeting the connectivity requirements of the city government's smaller sites perfectly. RED enabled the city to securely extend the main network to other remote departments with minimal effort.

The city government added Sophos Intercept X Advanced for Endpoint and Sophos Intercept X Advanced for Server, ensuring comprehensive endpoint protection and solidifying the city's defense against a myriad of threats. Intercept X Advanced has multiple tools in its arsenal: machine learning anti-malware, anti-ransomware, anti-exploit protection, web control, DLP, and more. The city also benefits from real-time threat intelligence, which helps identify potentially malicious activities and drives faster threat response and remediation.

Later on, the addition of Sophos Central's user-friendly interface and integration capabilities tied it all together. "While many vendors promised the world, the demo of Sophos Central stood out for us. The interface was intuitive, and the integration of RED with Sophos Wi-Fi, firewall, and endpoint solutions promised seamless connectivity and top-tier protection," VanVoorhees observed.

What tangible benefits can a holistic security solution offer?

Post-implementation, the city realized savings of around $300 per site. The new Sophos security solution was now faster, more efficient, and fully integrated. "Switching to Sophos wasn't just about cost savings. The enhanced speed and centralized management have been game-changers for us. Plus, with its Wi-Fi and firewall working in tandem, we're confident about our security," VanVoorhees said. Thanks to Sophos, the once disparate security tools and networks are now united under one central management console.

Navigating the digital security landscape can be daunting, but for the City of Petersburg, the partnership with Sophos became a model for municipalities everywhere. In Gerrit VanVoorhees' words, "With Sophos, we've fortified our defenses, streamlined our processes, and achieved cost efficiencies. It's been a win-win on all fronts."

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