

Case Study | Gallagher Heath



Reviewing IT security, building trust

At a glance

Situation

- High charges and lack of transparency with existing IT security provider
- General concerns about IT security
- Increasing regulatory pressure
- The need for a thorough review

Solution

- Network and security review of IT infrastructure and applications
- Blend of automated and manual testing including the simulation of malicious user activity
- Design and development of all security protocols
- Ongoing co-managed IT security service

Benefits

- Peace of mind and stability for the business
- IT security budget savings and increased effectiveness
- Improved IT security knowledge within the client's business
- Ongoing protection against IT security breaches and risk of non-compliance

The client



Gallagher Heath is a leading UK independent insurance broker, risk adviser and employee benefits consultancy with over 130 years' experience in the insurance industry. It has a wide range of clients, from major companies to sole traders and individuals.

Gallagher Heath works with some of the top global companies and utilises its purchasing and robust placing expertise to get the appropriate deal with its selected insurers. This entails great pricing, broad and bespoke wordings and an efficient claims approach from its dedicated in-house team.

Rapid insight into IT security status and a platform for business stability

Situation

Prior to talking to ACSN, Gallagher Heath had been through a period of great change. Trading conditions in the insurance market had been extremely tough and internal budgets had inevitably been under pressure. A significant expenditure on internal IT security – and also a perceived lack of transparency – was not helping the situation. At the same time, the FSA (Financial Services Authority) was also increasing its focus on tightening IT security.

Dave Collis, Operations Director at Gallagher Heath, explains:

“The level of our IT security required a thorough review and we needed to understand precisely where we stood and take the necessary steps to mitigate actual and potential risks. To do this, we needed a specialist IT security partner that could test our systems thoroughly.”

Increased understanding of IT vulnerabilities

“It was clear immediately that ACSN were experts in IT security and had a lot to offer us,” continues Collis. “The team at ACSN is genuine and knowledgeable. The more we discussed our situation with them, the more we understood about our potential IT security vulnerabilities.”

“ACSN’s main concern was to help us clearly identify security issues within our IT systems and applications. They undertook to do this in the most cost-effective way possible so that we quickly had the facts we needed to make well-informed business decisions regarding our security needs.”

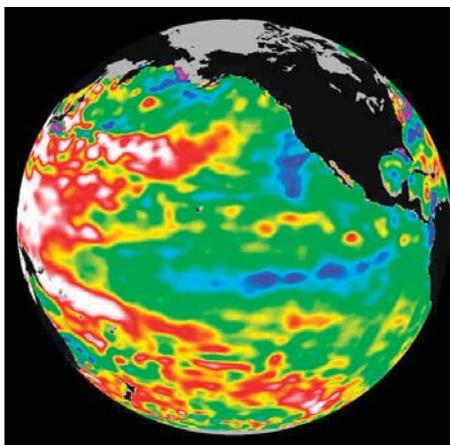
Solution

Initially ACSN carried out a detailed network and security review of Gallagher Heath’s IT infrastructure, which ultimately led to a penetration testing exercise. The test results confirmed that Gallagher Heath may have been more vulnerable to attack by malicious users than it had expected.

According to Dave Collis:

“Through data aggregators such as comparethemarket.com and confused.com, our systems are being ‘hit’ daily by an increasing number of users. For example, our systems are dealing with in excess of 100,000 quotes a day via these aggregators alone.”

With a high volume of traffic and numerous routes into Gallagher Heath’s systems – including internal Wi-Fi access for visiting clients and contractors – pinpointing potential security holes and scope for malicious user behaviour required the most rigorous testing procedures.



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Photos

Gallagher Heath serves corporate, medium enterprise, small business, affinity partnership and private clients across a wide range of industries and specialist areas.

Above left: In the corporate market Gallagher Heath creates flexible insurance programmes to match the emerging risks of the 21st century (ocean temperatures image courtesy of NASA Visible Earth). **Above centre and page 3:** Gallagher Heath also specialises in areas such as fine art, classic cars, antiques and collectables and musical instruments.

Solution - continued

Simulation of malicious user activity

ACS N's penetration testing blends automated and manual tests so that no stone is left unturned. In addition, ACS N's accredited and certified security experts can simulate malicious user activity. ACS N's consultants adopt the same thought processes and keystrokes of those who strive to penetrate networks and cause unwanted disruption and damage.

"ACS N tested everything, right down to the application layer," continues Collis. "They identified clearly where our security processes were working and highlighted areas of vulnerability and where we should seriously consider taking precautions."

More than just information security

As a result of that initial work, ACS N now provides an ongoing co-managed service to Gallagher Heath, including twice-yearly application and network penetration testing, plus hardware and software Firewall support and IT security consultancy and counsel.

"ACS N are now entrusted to design and develop our security protocols and provide the IT security consultancy and solutions that surround our entire physical IT layer," says Collis.

Concludes Collis: "Trust takes time to build, particularly in IT security where our natural approach is to trust no-one. Working with ACS N has been a breath of fresh air – they are technically excellent, their attention to detail is first-rate and they are able to converse with our technical and business teams on the same level. Our level of trust with ACS N is very high and growing all the time."

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Benefits

Gallagher Heath has moved from a period of instability and blossomed into a successful business, which currently has a turnover in excess of £100 million and employs almost 300 staff. Underpinning that success is industry-leading IT security management.

IT security expenditure has been reduced considerably and money that is spent on IT security is being used to far greater effect. Gallagher Heath also undertakes regular penetration testing exercises with ACS N to be sure their systems are completely secure.

"We now have trust in our supplier, constant advice and expertise that helps to keep our business secure, and far greater peace of mind within the IT

team and the broader business," says Collis.

"ACS N acts as our guardian when it comes to IT security. Remember, we face potential external attack from all over the world and potentially from within as well. It's been estimated that in excess of 5,000 websites are hacked every day."

Collis concludes: "Up-to-the minute, expert and consistent IT security management is critical for our business. With potential fines for failure to protect our customers' payment card and personal details running into millions of pounds, we must have the best advice and protection – and that's what we trust ACS N to deliver."

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About ACSN

ACSN is a specialist in IT security management. Our team of highly qualified and experienced IT security specialists ensure that our clients' IT systems meet compliance and regulatory standards and are fully protected from unwanted penetration and intrusion.

Our services range from penetration testing and security audits to complex firewall management and co-managed services that provide day-to-day management and support of all network security against the very latest threats and security issues.

ACSN adopts the very highest standards in its qualifications and accreditations, following industry best practice and applying innovative techniques. This gives our clients complete peace of mind that their IT systems remain safely protected.

We pride ourselves on our ability to deliver flexible solutions 24x7x365 and blend our expert services with each client's internal resources to provide a comprehensive, reliable and scalable IT security management solution.

ACSN clients include:

Barefruit | Capita Insurance Services | Gallagher Heath | Kingsley Napley
Royal Opera House | The Science Museum Group | United National Bank UK

Call us on 0845 519 2946 or email info@acsn.co.uk to learn more about how we can help your organisation optimise IT security.



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