

Case Study | Royal Opera House



Assuring web security and PCI compliance

At a glance

Situation

- Box office and shop revenue streams reliant on PCI compliance
- Existing IT security supplier ceases to offer Check Point services

Solution

- ACSN's Check Point security expertise recommended by outgoing supplier
- Rapid handover of all Check Point work to ACSN
- Dedicated ACSN consultant, backed up by phone support and IT security consultancy
- Annual and on-demand penetration testing

Benefits

- Stress-free PCI compliance for payment card systems
- Protection of revenue streams
- Knowledge transfer and clear documentation keeps IT security costs to a minimum
- Close working relationship provides ultimate peace of mind across all areas of IT security.

The client



The Royal Opera was formed as the Covent Garden Opera Company in 1946. The present theatre was built in 1858, though three theatres have stood on the site since 1732.

Following World War II the idea of public subsidy of the arts was accepted and the Royal Opera House became the permanent home of the companies now known as The Royal Opera and The Royal Ballet. The venue consistently welcomes over 640,000 audience members each year and raises £2+ for every £1 of revenue grant received.

Working hand-in-hand to protect revenue streams and reduce costs

Situation

The Royal Opera House is by no means a typical corporate organisation.

Around half of its 1,000 employees have little or no need to use a desktop PC while at work, as they are singers, dancers, orchestra musicians, costume makers, set builders and stage hands.

Even so, IT infrastructure and security are vitally important to this iconic Covent Garden venue, not least because the lion's share of its £100 million-plus income relies on secure, 24x7 sales of tickets and production-related merchandise.

Box office security

High on the agenda for the internal IT team, therefore, are box office security and systems availability. However, around three years ago the venue faced a major risk, which it needed to mitigate very swiftly.

Chris Bunce, Head of IT at the Royal Opera House, recounts this unexpected development: "As an organisation handling a high volume of credit and

debit card sales, our systems need to be PCI compliant - and compliance involves rigorous maintenance, auditing and proof of IT security.

"For us, central to achieving the required level of IT security - then and now - are various network security and firewall solutions from Check Point."

External Check Point specialists

"Our internal IT staff takes responsibility for certain areas of IT support, but our Check Point products are installed, maintained and supported by an external specialist supplier," continues Bunce.

"Out of the blue, this existing supplier dropped a bombshell: they told us they were pulling out of the Check Point market altogether."

Bunce believes the reason for this supplier's decision was that it could no longer guarantee the extremely high levels of IT security expertise required to understand and support Check Point products.

However, rather than leave the Royal Opera House without critical back-up, the outgoing supplier had its own thoughts

on how to solve the problem. They recommended that Bunce talk to a company well known for its Check Point know-how and all-round IT security expertise - ACSN.

Solution

The Royal Opera House needed to act quickly, but it did not want to be rushed into a decision.

According to Bunce, "We looked at a number of other IT security specialists but very soon concluded that ACSN offered everything we needed. The Royal Opera House is a medium-size organisation and ACSN is a great fit for us. Also, we liked the longevity of ACSN's staff. We wanted quality and continuity of service - and that's what ACSN could offer us. We wanted a personal relationship with our IT security consultants; we didn't want to deal with random engineers."

"They slotted straight in," says Bunce. "ACSN is a trusted extension of the IT team here, providing specific IT security services that ensure PCI compliance, taking full responsibility for our Check Point-based systems, and carrying out all required penetration testing."

"IT infrastructure and security are vitally important to this iconic Covent Garden venue... the lion's share of its £100 million-plus income relies on secure, 24x7 sales of tickets and merchandise."



Photos

Above left: The historic venue in Bow Street, Covent Garden, London, home to both the Royal Opera and the Royal Ballet. **Above right:** Zenaida Yanowsky as Marguerite and Artists of The Royal Ballet in Frederick Ashton's Marguerite and Armand. **Page 3:** The Royal Opera House box office, which relies on secure, PCI compliant payment card systems.

Firewalls and two-factor authentication

As well as handling Check Point firewall upgrades, new installations, rebuilds and configurations, ACSN also looks after Safe Word two-factor authentication for the Royal Opera House. This enables secure remote access to the venue's systems and data for authorised individuals.

Three years on from appointing ACSN, Bunce is convinced that ACSN was the right choice.

"We have a great relationship with our ACSN consultant - his IT security expertise and dedication to our organisation is exemplary," continues Bunce.

"If we need a firewall upgrade outside of peak trading times then our ACSN consultant will offer to be here at 6am. All

work is completed expertly and is fully documented. Nothing ever goes wrong, because ACSN people are brilliant at what they do."

Help is just a call away

"We also benefit from ACSN's excellent phone support and general IT security consultancy. If there's anything we cannot do ourselves we just call ACSN.

"On top of that, ACSN takes care of Check Point licensing for us, which is a complex area and hugely time-consuming for anyone who doesn't understand the intricacies.

"Then there's penetration testing, which ACSN conducts for us annually, as a minimum, as part of PCI compliance, and when we make significant code changes to our website. For example, we relaunched our website earlier this year.

We had to pen test the site before go-live and quickly fix any code problems so that the schedule didn't slip. ACSN's speed of response was fantastic!"



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Benefits

Bunce sums up the value of ACSN's services as follows:

"ACSN helps us keep our business running securely 24x7, most obviously by protecting the revenue streams of our physical and online box offices and shops.

"They help us achieve PCI compliance, and they willingly transfer knowledge and documentation, which saves us huge amounts of time, trouble and money.

"They also provide our organisation with the ultimate peace of mind. If there was ever a major IT security breach I know that ACSN would be here for us and would deal with it swiftly and appropriately."

Tellingly, Bunce says that ACSN's work almost completely 'under the radar'.

"Everything that ACSN does just works, so most of the people who work here don't know that ACSN exists!"

Nevertheless, ACSN's presence in this most famous and historic of venues isn't entirely ethereal.

"Most helpfully for me and my staff, excellent documentation is provided by ACSN immediately after any job is completed. That's real added value as it saves us so much time."

Bunce knows of no other IT supplier that does this. "I don't have to ask - the documentation just arrives. And, as with every service ACSN delivers, it's of the highest standard. I can trust them completely."

Bunce illustrates the point with the following example.

"When our ACSN consultant updates a Check Point firewall, he runs through everything with me face to face and also documents it. This enables us to carry out routine maintenance ourselves. Switches can fail, and when that happens we can move a cable over to a redundant switch and bring things back online. We are constantly adding to our knowledge thanks to ACSN, and it's a very cost-effective way of working."

ACSN is also valued for its independent and pragmatic approach.

"ACSN doesn't follow every Check Point upgrade slavishly - they tell us how far to go with a new release, and how to maintain the stability of our IT environment. It's very much a personal service tailored to our organisation."

Bunce concludes by reiterating his trust in ACSN: "Whilst the Royal Opera House generates strong revenues over and above the funding we receive, we clearly have to be very prudent with our IT spend. I can rely 100% on ACSN's expert IT security advice, and I have complete trust in them to carry out work appropriately and correctly."

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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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