

Case Study | United Bank UK



In-house team and external experts working as one

At a glance

Situation

- New Head of IT
- Secure banking seen as paramount
- Security Audit/Health Check required to assess situation

Solution

- High level strategic advice to eliminate any weaknesses in security
- A co-managed system to enable in-house capability to work with specialist expertise
- IT security that allows the business to make strategic decisions with confidence

Benefits

- A working arrangement that future-proofs security vulnerability
- Complete peace of mind that the bank has highly secure systems in place
- A motivated in-house team that is continually learning from experts

The client



United Bank UK was formed in 2001 from the merger of the UK branches of two Pakistani banks: United Bank Limited and National Bank of Pakistan. National Bank of Pakistan is the largest bank in Pakistan and is owned by the Government of Pakistan. United Bank Limited is the second largest private bank in Pakistan, whose main shareholder is the Bestway Group, and it has a presence in all the major financial centres of the world.

Strong and resilient IT security in a global marketplace

Situation

United Bank UK's principal activities are to provide retail banking products through its branch network in major cities in the UK, alongside wholesale banking, treasury and money transmission services to financial institutions, and trade finance facilities to businesses of all sizes. United Bank UK therefore maintains very high standards of IT security.

Paul Murphy, Head of IT at United Bank UK, explains:

"I joined United Bank UK in July 2010 and the first thing I did was to employ the services of IT security specialists, ACSN, to conduct a security audit on our IT systems. The output was a comprehensive report that documented all the security measures that a bank should consider in order to remain fully resistant to ever-improving cyber-attacks on its systems."

Building trust

United Bank UK was very keen to maintain its high standards of IT security. To achieve this, the bank knew it would benefit from professional help from a company that specialises in IT security management, and who would be fully aware of the latest advances in cyber-crime.

Murphy explains, "The dilemma facing many financial institutions is the requirement for specialist IT security advice from companies like ACSN; however, they can be reluctant to seek such advice until they have complete trust in them as a supplier."

He continues, "United Bank UK refused to search blindly in the market for an IT security specialist, but rather relied on a trusted word-of-mouth referral for ACSN. The bank was then able to engage confidently with ACSN to better understand how cyber-attacks are becoming more sophisticated and how respective in-house security measures must be continuously improved to prevent any unwanted system penetration."

Solution

United Bank UK recognised the need for high levels of security across all its IT systems. This meant a progression upwards from standard security measures on the various pieces of hardware and network infrastructure that connected its many affiliates across the world.

"We have a new datacentre in Birmingham and our network extends to six different branches in the UK. We also have VPNs in various locations around the world. With the assistance provided by ACSN our whole enterprise can now operate almost as though we are in the same building," explains Murphy.

He continues, "ACSN operates as our virtual IT security team and we have learned that we can trust them implicitly. For obvious reasons, we do not want a fully managed environment where we do not have complete control of our security."



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Photos

Left: United Bank UK was established in November 2001 and has an established business base and branch network throughout the United Kingdom. The bank provides tailored banking services to corporate and personal customers. **Above right:** United Bank UK's global connection gives customers access to money markets and currencies worldwide. **Page 3:** Like many of its customers, United Bank UK has strong links with the Asian sub continent.

Solution - continued

ACS N is therefore by our side as a trusted partner providing a co-managed service that combines our in-house skills with that of the external specialists, who of course have their fingers on the pulse of all IT security-related matters.”

United Bank UK does not sit on its laurels and is soon to launch its internet banking service, where ACS N will play a major role in ensuring the service remains secure.

Taking the next steps, together

United Bank UK is constantly evolving within the financial community and

evaluating new e-commerce products it can bring to the marketplace. As a result they are forever challenging their existing IT Security infrastructure. The bank therefore works very closely with ACS N to discuss new ideas on security measures that continue to support the bank’s progress and emerging business goals.

According to Murphy: “The good thing for United Bank UK is that ACS N is a security specialist and does not simply provide routers and firewalls for us to configure and install. ACS N takes a strategic view of the bank’s business goals and the implications of them on our IT security. ACS N then provides advice on how to make our whole infrastructure stronger and more resilient.”



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Benefits

United Bank UK has complete confidence internally that they are doing everything possible to maintain the tightest security.

“The reason we turned to ACS N was to provide confidence internally that we were doing all we could to maintain our high standards of security. The in-house team now believes we are at the cutting edge of secure technology, which is a motivator for them, and I have complete peace of mind that we have highly secure systems in place,” says Murphy.

Strategic advice for the business and the in-house team

ACS N prides itself on behaving and performing as part of the team and this means thinking strategically and tactically about all of aspects of IT security.

“The strategic advice provided by ACS N is highly valued by the in-house team and one of the things we admire most is the way ACS N transfers its

knowledge on to us. The in-house team is constantly learning new things and ACS N’s knowledge of security management is such that I must confess that I am still learning all the time too,” concedes Murphy.

Murphy adds, “Another thing we value and admire about our relationship with ACS N is that should it become necessary I can phone them 24/7 and they will move heaven and earth to get any problem resolved as quickly as possible. They always step up to the plate whenever they are needed.”

A mutual work ethic

Acknowledging that high levels of personal customer service are at the core of the ACS N offering, Murphy maintains that ACS N’s co-managed service represents exceptional value for money for United Bank UK.

“Pricing is always fair and is not an issue - in fact, the first thing that comes to mind with ACS N is their commitment and reliability,” says Murphy.

He continues, “I find it refreshing that ACS N does not mention pricing in times of need: they are simply 100% focused on helping us with our problems. I never feel like the clock is ticking and I believe this is because they genuinely care about us as a customer, which is why I trust them and am happy to refer them on to other companies whenever possible.”

Murphy concludes, “We find that working with ACS N is always a pleasure because they really are such nice people to deal with, and it seems nothing we ask is too much trouble.”

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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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