

WHEN IT COMES TO IT SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE: FOXWOODS ISN'T ROLLING THE DICE

As the world's largest casino's IT infrastructure grew, it needed to find the most efficient way to find and fix system vulnerabilities, and to maintain regulatory compliance.

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Leonard A. Szczygiel, Network Engineer
Foxwoods Resort Casino

It all started, more than 20 years ago, as the first high-stakes bingo hall founded by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. That interest has grown steadily to six casinos offering more than 7,000 slot machines and 400 gaming tables. In fact, with 340,000 square feet of gaming space, Foxwoods Resort Casino, MGM Grand at Foxwoods, is the largest casino in the world. The operation boasts 1,416 guest rooms and suites, and for conventions and group events, Foxwoods features more than 55,000 square feet of meeting space and 25 conference rooms.

Central to running this successful enterprise, is its IT infrastructure — and making sure that the casino's financial, ERP, guest management, and Web site stay up and running free from viruses, spyware, and criminal hacks. Also, because Foxwoods accepts reservations online, and even runs its own online shopping site — it must comply with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).

For a time, Foxwoods worked to make sure its systems remained secure and within the guidelines of security policy by hiring third-party consultants, as well as performing ad-hoc vulnerability assessments of its own. But once management decided it would be more efficient for Foxwoods to host its own Web site operations, the IT team needed an independent way to assess and manage risk and policy compliance continuously.

The need for independent, automated vulnerability assessments

“Once we brought everything in-house, we needed a way to conduct assessments on our own, so we could evaluate the security of a system, or our operations as a whole,” says Leonard A. Szczygiel, network engineer, MIS network engineering at Foxwoods. “And we needed a clear way to quantify the security information we were telling our management about. We would be discussing the risks of not patching certain systems, and management wouldn't really get what we were trying to explain to them,” he says.

To mitigate the costs, and the inconvenience, of having to hire regular outside penetration tests and network assessments, Foxwoods selected QualysGuard, from Qualys, Inc. QualysGuard is designed for IT infrastructures of any size, and supports an unlimited number of device assessments. Delivered as an on-demand service over the Web, QualysGuard makes deploying, maintaining, and updating vulnerability management servers and software all problems of the past. Today, Foxwoods relies continuously on QualysGuard to assess the security of both its internal and externally-facing infrastructure — and to remain PCI DSS compliant.

When it Comes To IT Security and Compliance: Foxwoods Isn't Rolling the Dice

Centralized PCI DSS compliance management

"The beauty of Qualys is that it is fully automated. You can schedule scans whenever and as often as you'd like," explains Szczygiel. "We currently schedule our assessments monthly so that we can pick up any new vulnerabilities, but we also can run on-demand as often as we need," he explains.

That capability is especially beneficial to not only achieve but maintain PCI DSS compliance. In fact, QualysGuard walks companies through the PCI DSS compliance process with a streamlined three-step automated process. This guided process includes straightforward online completion of the annual PCI DSS self-assessment questionnaire and network security scans, as well as automatic submission of the annual questionnaire and quarterly security assessment results that validate compliance.

"QualysGuard is our main tool for PCI compliance. It helps to automate many of our tasks associated with PCI, from assessing relevant systems to providing our reports to the acquiring bank," Szczygiel says. As Foxwoods' IT department has grown, Szczygiel finds it necessary to delegate more of their assessments, including those especially for PCI. "We formed a systems assurance group to delegate scans to others. We simply add another name to the access list and provide them certain IP ranges to manage. They then can run scans as they see fit and at their will."

Tight change control and security event correlation

"Maintaining a secure IT infrastructure is a greater challenge than merely attaining regulatory compliance, as Foxwoods' IT team is well aware. That is why every time a system is changed, or new application or server is deployed, it is vetted by QualysGuard before being sent into production. "Brand new servers get scanned; after systems are changed, they are scanned; and there is a scan following any updates to any of the web sites. Anytime something is touched, there is a scan," he explains. "People forget to do certain things that they should, or perhaps a developer is not aware that certain conditions create risk. QualysGuard helps us to find and fix those conditions," he says.

Leveraging as much as possible from QualysGuard's highly accurate and comprehensive database of more than security checks, Foxwoods has integrated its QualysGuard assessment data feed into its Security Event and Information Management System, SEIM. This additional intelligence, based on QualysGuard's understanding of Foxwoods' systems, helps to eliminate false-positive alerts from being dispatched from its SEIM. "It now knows to filter out, for instance attacks aimed at operating systems we don't have installed. We don't care about those. This system monitors everything, and the additional data from QualysGuard helps us save a lot of time investigating false positives," he says.

It's taken a lot of work, and a couple of years for Foxwoods to get its vulnerability and compliance risk management program to this level of sophistication, but as Szczygiel is quick to point out: it's more than worth it. "You are only as good, or as secure, as your weakest point. QualysGuard helps us to find our weakest points, or keep us from creating them in the first place."

FOXWOODS SCOPE & SIZE

12,000+ employees

BUSINESS

Operates six casinos that offer more than 7,000 slot machines and 400 gaming tables, 340,000 square feet of gaming space, 1,416 guest rooms and suites; and for conventions and group events, Foxwoods features more than 55,000 square feet of meeting space and 25 conference rooms.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

Once management decided it would be more efficient for the company to host its own Web site operations, the IT team needed to find a way to assess and manage the security of those systems. It also needed a way to manage its PCI DSS compliance.

Operational Challenge

Outside consultants were expensive, and not easy to schedule on a moments notice, while many vulnerability assessment tools required extensive effort to setup and manage. Additionally, those tools didn't provide the reports necessary to effectively communicate IT risk to management.

SOLUTION

QualysGuard

WEBSITE

www.foxwoods.com



USA – Qualys, Inc. • 1600 Bridge Parkway, Redwood Shores, CA 94065 • T: 1 (650) 801 6100 • sales@qualys.com
UK – Qualys, Ltd. • 224 Berwick Avenue, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 4QT • T: +44 (0) 1753 872101
Germany – Qualys GmbH • München Airport, Terminalstrasse Mitte 18, 85356 München • T: +49 (0) 89 97007 146
France – Qualys Technologies • Maison de la Défense, 7 Place de la Défense, 92400 Courbevoie • T: +33 (0) 1 41 97 35 70
Japan – Qualys Japan K.K. • Pacific Century Place 8F, 1-11-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, 100-6208 Tokyo • T: +81 3 6860 8296
United Arab Emirates – Qualys FZE • PO Box 10559, Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates • T: +971 7 204 1225
China – Qualys Hong Kong Ltd. • Suite 1901, Tower B, TYG Center, C2 North Rd, East Third Ring Rd, Chaoyang District, Beijing • T: +86 10 84417495

