



Securing the Enterprise

# Tower Records

QualysGuard Case Study / Retail & e-Commerce



*“Qualys has been immensely cost-effective in identifying security holes for us. Our security team reviews Qualys’ assessment reports and addresses vulnerabilities as quickly as possible, prioritizing fixes according to the level of severity defined by the service. QualysGuard has helped us drastically reduce network vulnerabilities.”*

Kevin Ertell

Director of Online Operations

## At a Glance

### Company:

Leading independent entertainment retailer

### Location:

Headquarters in Sacramento, California; over 170 locations worldwide and franchises in 8 countries

### Systems Scanned:

e-commerce servers

### Chief Benefits:

- Protection of customers’ confidential information
- Identification of vulnerabilities before they can be exploited
- Ability to run unlimited scans to test new servers and confirm that vulnerabilities have been fixed
- Reduction in manpower requirements for vulnerability scans—by as much as 20 hours per machine



## Leading Online Retailer Ensures Customer Information Remains Confidential With Vulnerability Assessment

Tower Records makes it a top priority to protect the confidential information of customers who order music, videos, and DVDs from the company’s Web site, [www.towerrecords.com](http://www.towerrecords.com). After all, customer confidence is an essential ingredient for online sales leadership. “It’s crucial to protect the privacy of our customers who order online, to keep their trust and keep them coming back,” says Kevin Ertell, Director of Online Operations.

When Tower Records first launched its e-commerce site in 1996, it relied on internal IT staff for network vulnerability assessment. “Several of our staff are quite knowledgeable about security,” says Ertell. “But assessing your own network’s security is like trying to proofread your own report. It’s clearly more effective to outsource vulnerability assessment to an outside, disinterested party like Qualys.”

## Vulnerability Assessment Complements Intrusion Detection

In mid-2001, Tower Records embarked on a two-pronged initiative to protect network security. A vulnerability assessment service would identify potential vulnerabilities before they could be exploited; and an intrusion detection system would notify the company when anomalous activity occurred.

“Vulnerability assessment and intrusion detection are complementary,” says Ertell. “It makes the most sense to start with vulnerability assessment; it enables you to identify and close obvious holes so that the intrusion detection system has fewer places to check.”

Tower set about looking for what Ertell calls a “white hat” hacking service that would periodically “hit” the network and identify vulnerabilities. Such services varied widely, in scope and costs. “Some vendors required that we purchase special hardware for our site, and others required that we subscribe to more services than we needed or wanted,” reported Ertell.

**QualysGuard Platform:**  
*Automated Network  
Vulnerability Identification,  
Elimination, and Verification*

QualysGuard is the first scalable, affordable Web service designed for companies of every size to audit network vulnerabilities. Delivered over the Internet, QualysGuard employs advanced vulnerability detection techniques, with its proprietary Inference-Based Engine, to assess a network's security exposures and suggest remedies before intruders can take advantage of them.

*"For IT professionals, it's a good feeling when you discover a vulnerability, fix it, and then run another QualysGuard scan and confirm that the vulnerability is gone."*

**Kevin Ertell**  
*Director of Online Operations*



**Qualys, Inc.**  
1600 Bridge Parkway  
Redwood Shores, CA 94065  
800.745.4355

European Headquarters  
+33 (0) 1 44 17 00 60

[www.qualys.com](http://www.qualys.com)

# Tower Records

**QualysGuard Case Study / Retail & e-Commerce**

## Automates the Complete Vulnerability Management Process

After evaluating several leading vulnerability assessment services, Tower selected the QualysGuard Automated Vulnerability Assessment solution, which had been recommended to the company by Qualys partner VeriSign. Ertell took advantage of the free trial offer. "I was impressed with the range of services in QualysGuard: identification of perimeter devices, scanning and analysis, reporting, and recommendations for fixes," he says. "The Web interface is easy to use. And most importantly, QualysGuard discovered vulnerabilities that the other services did not."

The responsiveness of Qualys as a company also factored into Ertell's decision. "Whether my question was technical or business-related, I received quick responses, every time."

## Proves Cost-Effective to Identify and Resolve Security Holes

In use at Tower Records since September 2001, QualysGuard has proven itself not only an effective service for Automated Vulnerability Assessment, but an economical one as well. The service required no purchase of hardware or software by Tower. And, unlike services that would have restricted Tower to a fixed number of scans each month for its subscription, QualysGuard includes unlimited scans. "The freedom to run a scan whenever needed is very important to us," says Ertell. "For IT professionals, it's a good feeling when you discover a vulnerability, fix it, and then run another QualysGuard scan and confirm that the vulnerability is gone."

Tower runs frequent scans on its e-commerce servers. Immediately after each scan, Tower's security team receives summarized reports via e-mail. To view a detailed report on a vulnerability via a secure Web interface, the Tower staff simply clicks a link on the e-mail. "For every vulnerability discovered, QualysGuard reports provide links to resources for remedying the vulnerability," says Ertell. "Surprisingly, some of the other solutions don't do this."

"Qualys has been immensely cost-effective for us," added Ertell. "Our security team reviews Qualys' assessment reports and addresses vulnerabilities as quickly as possible, prioritizing fixes according to the level of severity defined by the service. QualysGuard has helped us drastically reduce network vulnerabilities."

Tower supplements its pre-scheduled scans with manual, on-demand scans to confirm that vulnerabilities have been fixed, and before putting a new server into production. The company has reserved an IP address specifically for scanning new machines. "Almost every time we've scanned a new machine with QualysGuard we've discovered numerous vulnerabilities," says Ertell. "By fixing vulnerabilities before the machine goes online, we drastically reduce risk." Automated scanning of new machines—Tower installs 10 to 40 a year to support steady growth in online sales—relieves IT of a considerable time drain. "For servers that we configure according to a template, we save a few hours apiece by scanning with QualysGuard instead of manually checking for vulnerabilities, one by one," notes Ertell. "For custom-configured servers, we save about 20 hours. It amounts to very significant manpower savings."

## Protects Customers' Trust

Tower regards QualysGuard as an essential ingredient in keeping its customers' trust. "With QualysGuard we have considerably better security, which means we're doing an even better job of protecting our customers' information," says Ertell. "When our customers are happy, IT is happy."