Murdoch Webster Secures New Government Customer With Next-Gen Firewall Solution

Murdoch Webster, an Australian-owned and operated ICT professional services company, scales modern, intelligent IT environments that protect, transform, and evolve your business. The company is a Palo Alto Networks NextWave Platinum Innovator and Certified Professional Services Partner (CPSP), one of few to achieve that accreditation in the Australian market.

CYBERFORCE, a Palo Alto Networks technical recognition program, rewards our most elite partners for their pre- and post-sales expertise. **View** the value of CYBERFORCE.

Challenge

Government Agency Looks to Replace Legacy Firewall Solution for Sensitive Data

A compliance-oriented Australian government organization had legacy firewalls with limited visibility to secure their sensitive data and applications. They wanted more visibility of data accessed through the firewall and better control of who accessed that data. The customer also had multiple point products they had to manage instead of a single, consolidated platform.

A new firewall solution would need to cover multiple sites including the customer's head office location and data center. The government agency had nearly 100 users, none of whom were allowed to work remotely due to the sensitive nature of the data they need to secure.

The government organization was new to Palo Alto Networks and Murdoch Webster, so the partner had to build a relationship from ground zero. Chris Mearns, Founder and Chief Technology Officer at Murdoch Webster, says "I don't think we would have won the deal without CYBERFORCE. The program builds trust and customer confidence in us as a vendor who is putting forward a solution that would be best for their business, and not only meet but exceed their desired outcomes."

CYBERFORCE at Murdoch Webster:

- CYBERFORCE Pre-Sales Hero (highest level)
- CYBERFORCE Pre-Sales Defenders
- Strata Special Ops*
- And more on the way

*Technical expertise.

> "The fact that we have met the stringent requirements to move up the levels of CYBERFORCE gave the customer the assurance we were qualified and certified to put forward the right solution for them."
>
> Chris Mearns,
> Founder and CTO
> Murdoch Webster

Solution

Next-Generation Firewall Provides Better Visibility and Control

The partner recommended a Palo Alto Networks next-generation firewall solution (NGFW), using a single, consolidated core network firewall to replace another vendor's front-end and back-end legacy products.

The NGFW solution would provide more granular logging and reporting to show who was accessing sensitive data, when they were accessing it, and what device they were using.

Due to data confidentiality, the customer didn't allow the Murdoch Webster team to run a traditional demo using their own data. Instead, the partner made use of the Palo Alto Networks Ultimate Test Drive program to give a private, hands-on NGFW experience to the customer's engineers.

The government agency chose the Palo Alto Networks NGFW solution over three competitors' offerings. "The customer saw first-hand the user identification, the visibility of the traffic going through the firewall, and the ability to identify applications as well as malware," Mearns says. "Once they were able to see the types of traffic visibility, and the alerting and the logging they were able to get from the firewall, those capabilities helped sell them on the Palo Alto Networks solution."

Results

NGFW Deployment Opens Doors to Additional Platform Solutions

The sensitivity of the government data complicated the NGFW deployment, as Murdoch Webster engineers weren't permitted to access the customer's network using their own laptops. Instead, they talked through the deployment steps with the customer engineers, who learned more about the solution as they performed each step.

"They hadn't seen those kinds of capabilities on their platforms before," Mearns says. "As we talked them through the what, why, and how of each feature, you could see light-bulb moments happening."

Murdoch Webster on the Value of CYBERFORCE

A Palo Alto Networks partner since 2001, Murdoch Webster originally got involved with CYBERFORCE thinking it was simply a partner recognition program. But the more they spoke to their customers about it, the more important it became for them to meet the CYBERFORCE criteria and move up the levels.

"When Murdoch Webster engineers meet a new customer, they start by explaining what it means to be a long-time Palo Alto Networks partner and a Certified Professional Services Partner," says Chris Mearns. "Then they explain the CYBERFORCE program, how they maintain their CYBERFORCE status through rigorous requirements, and what that means for the customer to work with the best of the best. That gives customers the confidence that we know what we're talking about."

The solution's efficiency helps the organization's small IT team extend their ability to not only cover security and networking but also database administration. The core network firewall solution provides greater network segmentation ability to control access to the customer's databases. By exceeding the expected business outcomes, the solution has even enabled the customer to retire some other products.

Mearns' team is using Palo Alto Networks Best Practice Assessments and Artificial Intelligence for IT Operations (AIOps) to ensure the customer is configuring the firewall solution correctly. They're alerted if the customer's IT team puts in a policy that reduces their best practice score.

Now that the customer has seen the platform in action, they are evaluating other Palo Alto Networks solutions such as Cortex, which brings together threat detection, prevention, attack surface management, and security automation capabilities into one integrated platform.

"When we started talking about the platform as a whole, with cloud-delivered services such as threat intelligence coming into the firewalls, that conversation struck a chord with the customer," Mearns says.

The visibility and control of the NGFW solution has given the customer confidence to look at changing the way they allow users to access their network. They are considering Palo Alto Networks GlobalProtect on the firewalls for secure remote access, then potentially Prisma Access for a secure access service edge.