CASE STUDY
Wrexham County Borough Council
"Not just a firewall partner, but a cyber security partner"

Introduction

SEP2 are the preferred cyber security partner for Wrexham County Borough Council. SEP2 provide and manage their Check Point firewalls – a critical element of their cyber security posture. In this case study, we speak to the team at the council to see how this cyber security partnership came about, the scale of the project and exactly how the two partners work together.

Background

Wrexham County Borough Council is the governing body for Wrexham County Borough, a local government principal area based in Wrexham - the largest town in North Wales. As with most county councils, they deal with a variety of services for the public, from schools and education to planning and health and social care. The borough council encompasses 47 wards in total.

Peter Grimley is the Infrastructure Manager; he manages a team of engineers and network specialists.

Cyber Security is a huge priority for the council. They manage vast amounts of personal data for the community, all of which must be protected from the increasing volume of cyber threats. As such, it is critical that the council work with the very best people and technology to stay ahead of the threat.

The council approached Check Point, a world-renowned firewall vendor, early in 2020 to discuss changing their partners and updating the firewall. The Council needed to work with a Check Point partner that was proactive, knowledgeable and best-in-class when it came to cyber security. Check Point introduced SEP2 as their chosen cyber security specialist.

The Project

From the council's perspective, the project is all about protecting personal data. This includes electoral roll, social care and schools. The amount of data held by the council is vast, and it is of a very sensitive nature. Cyber security is not an aspiration - it is an absolute necessity. Thus, the council not only need the very best in technology, but to work with experts capable of ensuring that the tech is doing what it needs to.

The existing infrastructure was outdated and the policies needed an update. Hardware was becoming obsolete, and there were around 15 years of rules that needed consolidating. The project was vast, and of course, all of this work needed to take place whilst ensuring absolute security every minute of every day without impacting the day to day delivery for the users.

SEP2's Offering

Mike Goodwin is one of SEP2's directors. With Check Point, Mike met Peter and his team, and explained his vision of what SEP2 could do to assist the council. With an emphasis on support, Mike was able to explain to Peter that the migration to a new system and all of the associated compliance work would be carried out professionally and at zero risk. SEP2 are experienced in exactly this sort of migration project, so could detail the process with absolute conviction.

SEP2, with Check Point, won the business and started working with Wrexham Council in mid-2020.

Executing the Project

Since the entire core network was being replaced, the project required daily support from SEP2, who also needed to integrate with the incumbent network and internet providers. Peter describes this collaboration as 'fantastic', with Mike and other SEP2 staff being instrumental in this.

Migration from the old firewall to the new firewall started in December 2020, and was successfully implemented the first time, with no additional exposure to risk throughout.

This was a bespoke project that relied on SEP2's rigorous and process-driven approach. For example, the legacy rules, which all needed updating and reconstructing, numbered over 300 in total. So, intense project management was key to a successful outcome.

Onboarding is also key to success. This can only be done with a comprehensive skills and technical review, knowledge transfer and clear communication. SEP2 are 'Tech Driven and People Powered" and pride themselves in a seamless and smooth onboarding process involving technicians and account managers from across the business.

So, what is it like working with SEP2?

There are several themes that emerge in conversation with Peter and his team at the council. The first of these is trust. Through their expertise and brilliant customer service, SEP2 were quickly able to engender trust with Wrexham council. As Peter puts it: "Once the trust is there, the conversations are easier to have."

Another theme is being easy to work with. "With SEP2, it never feels like a hard sell. They were always willing to be patient with us."

Finally, SEP2 are lauded by the council for their pro-activity. Peter goes on: "SEP2 are knowledgeable, motivated and switched on; they take ownership and they have a drive for resolution. They know their stuff!"

"SEP2 are not merely a firewall partner, they are a cyber security partner. They take a strategic approach. They are approachable and offer additional value outside of their support contract. Working with SEP2 means we are no longer fire-fighting; rather we can now take a step back and proactively get things sorted."

"SEP2 say they are tech driven and people powered, and that's exactly what they are! It all comes down to the people you are dealing with."

What's next for Wrexham County Borough Council and SEP2?

SEP2 are soon going to be supporting the council with a strategic gap analysis. They will review all current policies and advise accordingly. The council have identified additional areas in which they need to invest, and with the continued support from the SEP2 team, are looking forward to further increasing their cyber security posture.