

TDIC Meets Regular Security Auditing Guidelines While Increasing Productivity

Pulse Secure protects critical network access and reduces delays in on-boarding new users while meeting strict regulatory controls

Summary

Company: Abu Dhabi Tourism Development & Investment Company

Industry: Property Development

Challenges:

- Secure network access that is simple to manage across thousands of users
- Meet UAS IAS regulations during NESAs audits
- Ease of network access to successfully meet project deadlines

Selection Criteria: TDIC needed to strengthen its security to meet UAE IAS regulations while providing IT resources and support to hundreds of users, each with different access needs.

Network Solution:

- Pulse Secure 5000 series appliances
- Pulse Connect Secure (SSL-VPN)
- Pulse Policy Secure Software

Results:

- Simplified and highly automated secure access to network resources for all users and devices
- Adherence to federal regulations on security controls for critical national infrastructure
- Streamline on-boarding process leading to productivity gains

Balancing security with ease of access to network and application resources is a major challenge for organizations when working collaboratively with external stakeholders during multi-phase projects. The mix of employees, business partners, contractors, and even customers each requiring different levels of secure access that can change based on device, location and stage of the project can lead to lengthy on-boarding periods and complex management tasks for busy IT departments.

Delays in granting secure access hamper the success of projects while cutting corners can lead to security issues and breaches of regulatory requirements. Pulse Secure Access for the Next Generation provides solutions designed to solve the challenges of access control, SSL VPN, and mobile device security.

Selection Criteria

The Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC) is a master developer of major tourism destinations in Abu Dhabi. TDIC was created in 2006 as the dedicated tourism asset management and development arm of the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), in order to drive the investment, growth and development of the Emirate's tourism sector. TDIC have been actively involved in many of the Emirate's most prestigious and high profile projects.

Most of the projects handled by TDIC are collaborative efforts that include many international partners including brand owners, architects, project managers and suppliers along with engineering, legal and other specialist contractors required across the phases of each project. Massive construction projects such as The St Regis Saadiyat Island Resort can span over many years requiring input from hundreds of people working with budgets running into hundreds of millions of dollars.

To support the delivery of such projects, TDIC relies on a wide range of software applications and file sharing platforms for design, management, collaboration and scheduling that are hosted on its network or accessed via third party connectivity. With the scale and complexity involved, the IT department had previously struggled with ensuring secure access to both its network and shared resources for TDIC employees and teams from partner organizations.

As Muhammad Asad Khalil, Senior Network and Security Engineer for TDIC explains, "We normally have between 800 to 1000 TDIC staff on our network but during major projects we may need to provide IT resources and support for hundreds of additional users and any delays can hamper the success of the project to meet key deadlines."

TDIC is also under regulatory supervision and audited by the National Electronic Security Authority (NESAs), which has implemented the UAE Information Assurance Standards (UAE IAS) that lists 188 security controls in a prioritized approach that must be applied by government bodies and business organizations considered to be critical infrastructure.

Solution

With pressures to meet the IT requirements of major projects and stringent security controls, TDIC developed processes to ensure that each device attaching to its network is security vetted along with installing any required software or patches. "This could lead to delays of several days as we worked through this process especially for people that wanted to bring their own devices (BYOD) rather than a TDIC provided laptop," explains Mr. Khalil.

As part of a strategic project to strengthen its security posture, meet its UAE IAS commitments and streamline the provisioning of network access to secure devices, the IT department at TDIC began evaluating a number of technology platforms.

TDIC has successfully used Pulse Connect Secure appliances and software for its SSL VPN access but wanted to take a deeper look at all the available options. "We looked at the market and there was a number of point solutions that addressed some of our requirements," says Mr Khalil, "However, in our evaluation it was only Pulse Secure that had a fully integrated solution for both SSL and NAC, offering us the flexibility to design policies and processes that met all of our needs while providing a single management console to reduce many complex management requirements."

The new implementation uses a high availability trio of Pulse Secure 5000 series appliances running Pulse Policy Secure Network Admission Control (NAC) software. The platform is integrated with a local certificate authority server (CA) that is used to validate the digital certificate on devices of TDIC employees and authorized partners that connect to the network. This is then followed by Active Directory authentication support to provide policy driven access to resources across the network. TDIC uses Policy Secure to set up and drive policies that automate the device validation and access rights. It also creates secure VLAN connections to ensure it meets security best practice as defined by the UAE Information Assurance Standards. The system also covers peripherals such as printers, scanners, CCTV cameras and other connected systems based on MAC address.

Results

"We now have processes in place to setup access for new staff and partners, on any type of device at any location that are either fully automated or take just a few minutes," explains Mr. Khalil, "This is a major benefit for our business, enabling us to take advantage of more flexible working arrangements such as hot desking and better collaboration between our partners without compromising on security," he adds.

The detailed reporting offered by the Pulse Secure platform has also made it easier for TDIC to meet its regular security auditing requirements set under UAE IAS guidelines. TDIC is now looking at expanding the project to provide more granular mobile device management (MDM) capability via the Pulse Secure Pulse Workspace solution.

The project at TDIC shows how regulatory requirements can be a perfect catalyst for seizing the initiative with transformative approaches to network security that can also provide a major boost to productivity and operational efficiency.

Corporate and Sales Headquarters

Pulse Secure LLC
2700 Zanker Rd. Suite 200
San Jose, CA 95134
www.pulsesecure.net

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