



Kingston University

Case study

Kingston University strategically deploys Outpost24's OUTSCAN and HIAB solutions to identify and remediate against vulnerabilities.

Kingston University is a University based in South-West London. Its roots go back more than 100 years to its original foundation as a polytechnic – Kingston Technical Institute – in 1899. Today it has more than 25,000 students and 4,000 members of staff, spread across seven faculties and four campuses within Kingston upon Thames, London.

The Challenge

Every year Kingston University and other universities in the London area conduct an audit of their IT departments. The purpose of this is to reveal any potential weaknesses in the IT infrastructure and any problem areas that need to be addressed. During its 2007 audit, the University's team was asked whether it was doing anything to proactively discover vulnerabilities on its network. It wasn't, so it decided to address the issue based on this recommendation, as well as a number of other factors:

Public sector under the media spotlight – Operating in the public sector, it is absolutely critical that Kingston University is seen to be taking the security of its systems and the valuable data contained on them, seriously. With the public sector often a target of media attention it was vital that Kingston University ensured that the security of its IT infrastructure was up to scratch.

Data leakage – A number of data breach incidents in the UK were starting to hit the headlines and with rumblings of a crack-down on organisations seen to be in breach of proper data security standards, Kingston University decided to take action. Any breach of security would have a massive impact on the University – not just financially from any potential fine or a subsequent funding cut, but more so in terms of damage to the University's public image – essential if it is to continue attracting students from around the world.

Sensitive information – Given the number of users accessing Kingston University's systems, and the highly sensitive information held, if there was a vulnerability which allowed that information to be leaked into the outside world, it could have the capacity to damage not only the University's finances, but also its reputation.

The Solution

When searching for a suitable solution, Kingston University quickly came across Outpost24, and following an initial meeting, the team there was impressed: "Its solution was exactly what we needed," said Mark Nicholls, Infrastructure Security Manager. "Outpost24 could provide us with a service that we could manage and completely tailor to our individual requirements. It met our needs perfectly."

Kingston University chose to deploy Outpost24's HIAB, a plug-and-play appliance for internal vulnerability assessment and management, as well as OUTSCAN, an on-demand solution for perimeter vulnerability assessment and management.

The products immediately presented a number of key benefits over the competition:

Intuitive Interface – The initial demonstration of the solutions showed that Outpost24's products had an easy-to-use and intuitive web interface. This made the set up of the system and the initial use of the products much quicker and the whole process more straightforward.

Comprehensive reports – The content generated, particularly with the addition of the executive summary at the start of each report, provides valuable insight to all relevant parties within Kingston University's infrastructure team – right up to senior management. The reports are easy to read and can be tailored to include as much information as necessary in each situation.

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Cost-effective – Cost was also a factor in the decision to select Outpost24. Having approached four well known consulting firms, it was clear that a similar solution from them would have cost three or four times the amount of Outpost24's solution. Both HIAB and OUTSCAN came out as the most cost-effective solutions for Kingston University.

Internal and external scanning capabilities – Whilst the University does have additional tools in place to defend the external network – intrusion detection, firewalls etc. – Outpost24's OUTSCAN solution provides an additional layer of security by running regular vulnerability assessments on the perimeter. The internal network was more of a worry for the IT team, as there was no solution in place to monitor this threat. HIAB's ability to scan within the network means that any breaches of security that might be taking place within the firewall are detected immediately.

Results

Kingston University has been using Outpost24's HIAB and OUTSCAN solutions for more than four years now. In that time the security landscape has changed significantly, with more vulnerabilities being detected and more significant repercussions for those organisations that fail to take the right steps to appropriately defend their networks. Outpost24's solutions have enabled Kingston University to keep pace with that change, as well as the natural growth that has occurred within the University itself.

Scalability – Kingston University is using 25 – 30% more systems today than it was four years ago, so the amount of scans that it is conducting has substantially increased. The speed at which the vulnerabilities can be resolved through Outpost24's solution means that even in spite of this rapid growth, the everyday running of each of the systems has not been affected.

Dedicated support team – It is testimony to Outpost24's products ease of use that Kingston University have only ever had to use its 24/7 dedicated support team twice in the entire time that they have been working together. In both cases both issues were resolved promptly and with little disruption to the University's infrastructure team.

Constant protection – With the UK Information Commissioner's office now able to issue fines of up to £500,000 for organisations who are in breach of the Data Protection Act, it is now more imperative than ever that Kingston University ensures that its systems are secure and regularly updated. Outpost24's products enable the University to proactively pinpoint and patch vulnerabilities affecting their systems, avoiding the downtime, costs and bad PR associated with breaches. Its database of over 29,000 vulnerabilities means its products can offer protection against a wide range of threats.

"Outpost24 has provided us with some great products that tick all the boxes," continued Nicholls. "The ease of use has been key – you don't need a technical background to operate the solutions, as you do with some competing products. It provides you with a breakdown of the results – explaining any vulnerability flagged and most importantly, how you can fix it. That has been worth its weight in gold to us."

About Kingston University

With more than 25,000 students, Kingston University is the largest provider of higher education in South West London, offering an extensive range of courses both in the United Kingdom and overseas. The University is renowned for teaching excellence, has established itself as a growing force in research and is a pioneer in e-learning. In its most recent university league table, The Sunday Times praised Kingston for having "one of the best teaching records of the country's modern universities". The University boasts a raft of modern facilities. Three new buildings have opened as part of a £123 million investment programme running until 2018.

About Outpost24

Vulnerability Management Made Easy. Outpost24's on-demand vulnerability assessment and management solutions are used by over 2,000 corporate and government customers, including Travellex, Delta Lloyd Group, ING Life Limited, University of Helsinki, and Banco Multiva. Outpost24 is headquartered in Sweden with a global network of local sales offices.

Outpost24 delivers security solutions in a Software-as-a-Service (OUTSCAN® & OUTSCAN PCI®) or Appliance (HIAB®) form factor. Outpost24's solutions provide fully automated network vulnerability scanning, easily interpreted reports, and vulnerability management tools. OUTSCAN PCI® is the ideal tool for businesses of all sizes to achieve and demonstrate PCI DSS compliance. Outpost24's solutions can be deployed in a matter of hours, anywhere in the world, providing customers an immediate view of their security and compliance posture.