MER CASE STUDY

MACFARLANES

Market Sector: Legal

London-based law firm Macfarlanes is a renowned international practice dealing with the full spectrum of corporate, commercial and private legal matters spanning a wide range of industries. Its 76 partners and over 180 solicitors work with other leading independent firms and lawyers around the world to offer a continuous and seamless service to clients, wherever and whenever they need it.

THE CHALLENGE

Due to the multi-agency and multijurisdictional nature of Macfarlanes' legal counsel, it is only possible for the firm to deliver a seamless service offering if all parties involved with a case are able to interface effectively, sharing confidential legal materials and other sensitive resources in a secure and convenient manner. Currently this is achieved via a corporate virtual private network (VPN), comprising Citrix, Outlook Web Applications and Microsoft Exchange.

Historically, Macfarlanes had relied upon SMS-based authentication system to secure access to its VPN gateways. But, as utilisation increased, Macfarlanes' SMS overheads quickly started to climb.

Available signal was also identified as an inhibiting factor. Clients and staff that were situated in poor coverage areas were experiencing difficulties accessing the VPN when working on-site. The loss or misplacement of users' mobile phones was also causing problems since without a handset, access to the VPN could not be achieved. In a bid to mitigate against these problems, IT managers at Macfarlanes began to circulate static security codes to facilitate access; an activity that compromised the original objective of deploying an authentication solution in the first place.

THE SOLUTION

Upon the recommendation of one of its consultants, Macfarlanes turned to global multi-factor authentication specialist, Swivel Secure, for help. The firm remained enthusiastic about using the mobile channel to secure its VPN, contending that a key requirement of any future solution from Swivel should utilise the tablets and other touch-screen devices popular with its workforce. In response to this enquiry, Swivel offered Macfarlanes the option to pilot its PINpad solution in November 2012.

The user-friendly, touch-screen PINpad solution works across all browsers, mobile platforms and web applications enabling an organisation to tailor the solution to their own security policies and working needs. The tokenless authentication facility works by displaying an in-browser 'challenge' to the user, prompting a correct response in order for authentication to take place.

The PINpad interface uses 10 separate images to represent a security string. The images are the combined with the authentication form to present a scrambled pin pad. PINpad enables a user to authenticate by selecting the number on the numeric pad that would, conventionally, represent their PIN. This process generates a one-time code which is sent back to the Swivel server, creating a secure method of input.
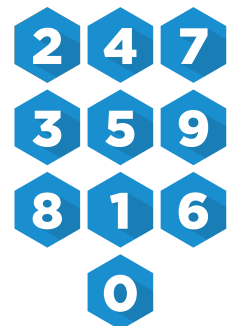
PINpad was embraced by the firm as employees found familiarity with the interface, which is very similar to that used on ATMs, calculators, safes and elsewhere, which both eased and accelerated the initial process of adoption. As a result, the solution was rolled out almost instantly; virtually no transition period was required.

BENEFITS

In the ten months that PINpad has been live at Macfarlanes, the firm has enjoyed a variety of benefits:

IMPROVED CLIENT SERVICE

Employees working remotely are able to access the network quickly, securely and conveniently, helping them to embody the company ethos of offering a seamless service to clients, wherever and whenever they need it.

TIGHTER SECURITY

There is no longer a need to jeopardise VPN security by circulating static codes, thus reducing the risk of corporate data loss and the leaking of sensitive legal documents.

REDUCTION IN COSTS:

Thanks to the elimination of SMS, Macfarlanes has seen a 70% reduction in the cost of its authentication.

WHY SWIVEL?

The PINpad solution was implemented fully in January 2013 to 450 users and will be expanded to 500 licenses by the end of the year.

Macfarlanes provided the following reasons for selecting the Swivel PINpad solution:

• The implementation and integration of the PINpad solution seamlessly fits with the firm's existing remote working solution.

• The PINpad interface was simple, user-friendly, fast and convenient.

• The solution was far more cost effective than the previous authentication platform, with a 70% saving already made.

• PINpad works with touch screen devices and fits with the company vision to embrace mobility as a working fundamental.

• The firm has received a strong level of technical support from Swivel engineers.

Dean Kelley, Network Support Analyst at Macfarlanes, comments:

We required a solution that was easy to use, flexible and embraced the use of mobile devices. We chose to implement the Swivel PINpad solution as it not only provided the level of security we required when staff accessed the corporate virtual private network on the move, but it also works seamlessly with the touch screen devices that are popular with many of our employees.

We implemented the Swivel authentication platform in January 2013 with 450 licenses and will soon be expanding to 500 licenses. Swivel is a flexible solution which has been simple and easy to integrate into our existing infrastructure, ensuring a smooth transition from our previous supplier. We have also been impressed with the support received from the technical team at Swivel, for whom nothing has been too much trouble.