

Supermarket Chain

Clients

Count on Stratus

Meeting PCI Compliance for a Mission-Critical Process with Stratus® Services and ARI

Business situation

Retailers that process credit, debit or prepaid transactions on cards from the major card associations have complied with the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standard (DSS) since 2004.

Then in 2006, in an effort to strengthen security, Visa changed how merchants were classified under its PCI compliance program. Those merchants whose classifications were raised from Level 4 to Level 2 faced an enormous effort, and had just one year to verify their compliance.

A supermarket chain in the Northeastern U.S. found itself with exactly this challenge. In addition to the quarterly penetration scan it was already running, its new Level 2 status made it subject to an extensive self-assessment questionnaire that required a perfect score. The supermarket chain had to make the changes necessary to its existing electronic funds transfer (EFT) application and its IT infrastructure — while avoiding any noticeable impact on card processing in the stores.

"I was able to turn to your company to get the solution to keep our business going. It's worth a lot to have Stratus as a strategic partner. Going forward, that gives me a lot of confidence."

Director of Information Technology

Quick Facts

Solution profile

- Enables PCI DSS compliance
- Zero interruption to critical business processes during implementation
- Secures existing mission-critical application and system
- Implementation completed ahead of deadline

Services

- Stratus® Professional Services

Products

- VOS-Auditor from Application Resources, Inc.
- Stratus Continuum® systems
- Stratus VOS operating system

Business objectives

The business situation dictated a set of daunting objectives:

- Meet the higher level of PCI compliance within the 12-month deadline
- Keep the existing business service going without any impact to the stores, including downtime or revenue loss
- Update the critical application and system already running in production
- Minimize the impact on in-house staff, allowing them to focus on other required IT initiatives

The availability solution

The Director of IT began by prioritizing the areas that had the most potential for risk based on their importance to the business. Since 1989, the supermarket chain had been relying on a fault-tolerant Stratus system to perform as its EFT switching platform, communicating with registers in the stores as well as the credit and debit card networks. The IT director ranked this mission-critical system as the first priority for that reason.

"Encrypting the data was part of the PCI requirements. Because Stratus has serviced us for many years — very successfully — I went right to them for a solution," said the IT director. "I asked them not just to encrypt data, but also to help us secure the server to make sure that we meet the PCI standard."

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The supermarket chain brought in Stratus Solutions Services to perform a complete assessment, including on-site data gathering to identify areas for remediation. After the assessment was completed and reviewed, a Stratus team of Trusted Availability Advisors was engaged to create a Statement of Work that specified an exhaustive implementation plan.

With data encryption among the capabilities required for compliance, the VOS-Auditor product from Application Resources, Inc. (ARI) was part of the solution proposed by Stratus. VOS-Auditor is a suite of security and auditing software that helps companies meet the PCI DSS standard. A key point in ARI's favor was their 25-year history of designing, implementing and supporting VOS tools for production at some of the world's largest financial institutions.

Besides providing data encryption, the supermarket chain would also be able to use the VOS-Auditor suite to: monitor the EFT application; manage access to directories and files; secure user IDs; manage encryption keys and log the information necessary to document PCI compliance.

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The implementation plan also called for Stratus Solutions Services to harden security parameters within the VOS operating system itself. Each and every parameter would be documented in a PCI procedures and policies manual, down to the exact commands used to secure the server.

To ensure success, the Director of IT insisted on having all the implementation details mapped out step-by-step. The Stratus team responded by organizing the project in phases. Each phase had a detailed implementation plan, pre-production testing plan and back out plan.

Business impact

Before any changes were rolled out to the production system and application, preliminary testing was carried out on a server in the Stratus Customer Support Lab. Changes were then tested again on an image of the EFT production system at the supermarket's disaster recovery site.

In addition to performing quality assurance testing using a server identical to those in the production environment, this

procedure allowed data conversions to be timed. Rehearsal was crucial; some databases would take as long as eight hours to convert. And with the supermarkets open for business seven days a week, all conversions and changes had to be rolled out overnight before stores opened the following day.

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The attentive preparation paid off. Though ready to do so, the Stratus team never once had to use the back out procedures as changes were rolled into production. "There was absolutely no disruption at all. The changes were unnoticeable to the stores," said the chain's IT director.

Not only did business continue as usual in the chain's check-out lanes, but also the project went from start to finish in eight months — four months ahead of the time limit.

What's more, working with Stratus and choosing VOS-Auditor allowed the chain to beat its PCI compliance deadline with a manageable contribution from its in-house IT personnel. Staff members did not have to be pulled away from other major initiatives.

Over and above achieving the higher level of PCI compliance on an unforgiving deadline, the IT director sees another significant benefit. He noted, "I was able to turn to your company to get the solution to keep our business going. It's worth a lot to have Stratus as a strategic partner. Going forward, that gives me a lot of confidence."

About Stratus

Stratus Technologies is a global solutions provider focused exclusively on helping its customers achieve and sustain the availability of information systems that support their critical business processes. Based on more than 25 years of expertise in server and services technology for continuous availability, Stratus is a trusted solutions provider to customers in retail, financial services, manufacturing, life sciences, telecommunications, public safety, transportation & logistics and other industries.

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