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*Victor Hijl
eHealthNet Architect, Research and Development Team, PharmaPartners*



CUSTOMER NAME

PharmaPartners

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

CHECK POINT PRODUCTS

- VPN-1® Power
- FloodGate-1®
- Provider-1®
- VPN-1 Power VSX
- UTM-1 Edge™

CUSTOMER NEEDS MET

- Secure online access to patient records for healthcare professionals
- Stress-free, secure communication between healthcare professionals
- A scalable, manageable, and QoS-assured security solution
- Improved cooperation between doctors and pharmacies



www.pharmapartners.nl

PharmaPartners Secures 7 Million Patient Records Using Check Point Technology

ABOUT PHARMAPARTNERS

Founded 26 years ago, PharmaPartners is an independent IT specialist in the Netherlands and is a key IT-infrastructure provider within the region’s healthcare industry. The company delivers a range of highly secure, outsourced IT services that allow doctors and other medical professionals to communicate and cooperate including via eHealthNet, a service that integrates the disparate online communications networks of different healthcare professionals. Launched in March 2004, this service now is used by more than 2,460 primary healthcare workers, helping provide integrated healthcare to nearly 45 percent of the Dutch population—more than 7 million citizens.

THE PHARMAPARTNERS CHALLENGE

Traditionally, doctors in the Netherlands work within regional healthcare groups, alongside pharmacists, physiotherapists, and other healthcare professionals. Until recently, each of these groups had their own separate online networks that used highly secure leased lines, which PharmaPartners provided. However, because all the networks were separate, there was little sharing of information with other healthcare professionals in neighboring cooperatives, which had unintended consequences. For example, when a patient needed to see a specialist outside her healthcare group, documentation had to be sent via mail, which increased the complexity of administration.

To improve cooperation among medical professionals, PharmaPartners developed the eHealth Information Concept, a system that links eHealthcare Groups with one another via a rich GUI and a centralized electronic patient record system. To ensure the best performance, PharmaPartners had to clearly divide the shared network of the user groups from the open network, which meant that the security infrastructure had to be better than ever. This new, more secure network became “eHealthNet.”

Building the eHealthNet infrastructure was far from simple, as Victor Hijl, eHealthNet architect within PharmaPartners’ research and development team, explains. “First, we had to make sure that our system met all the functional and performance needs of its users—and they had high expectations from their previous experience with us. We also had to ensure that it was resilient, manageable, and that we had all the right disaster recovery procedures in place. Above all, we had to make sure we could deliver the high levels of security that Dutch citizens expect. We realized there was only one security supplier that met our needs—Check Point.”

THE CHECK POINT SOLUTION

PharmaPartners has standardized security on Check Point products. For perimeter security at server sites, PharmaPartners chose VPN-1® Power, a tightly integrated product that provides firewall security and VPN connectivity. All other perimeter security within eHealthNet is covered with UTM-1 Edge™ appliances, which provide secure connectivity for remote sites. This solution allows PharmaPartners to secure every access point to the network quickly and easily. It also allows easy authentication of customer sites on the network via secured, encrypted VPN tunneling from every authorized location.

PRIORITIZING MEDICAL TRAFFIC OVER OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

In the Netherlands, doctors often work from home offices, where Internet connections can be used for both business and personal purposes. To minimize risks, PharmaPartners implemented Check Point technologies to separate and independently secure business and private connections.

Check Point FloodGate-1®—a policy-based, quality-of-service solution (QoS) for VPNs—and UTM-1 Edge make business connections secure and enable prioritization of eHealthNet traffic. For nonbusiness Internet use, PharmaPartners put in place a central eHealthNet Internet gateway to act as a first line of defense. This security solution is built on a VPN-1 Power clustered gateway.

FloodGate-1 also helps PharmaPartners measure and ensure QoS at all times, thereby maximizing the benefits of eHealthNet for doctors. “With FloodGate-1, we can guarantee bandwidth and control latency, meaning significantly improved performance for all business-critical traffic without any compromise on the security of information,” Hijl says.

With a large and distributed network, PharmaPartners required absolute clarity on access and utilization of its service. The Provider-1® multi-policy management solution meets the specific challenges PharmaPartners faces as a managed security provider. Every one of its connections to the network is assigned to a user group and its policies. This solution makes the large and growing number of PharmaPartners deployments workable and maximizes efficiency in managing its security infrastructure.

On the infrastructure side, PharmaPartners faced the challenge of consolidating servers within its data center without compromising its service level promises. It had to be able to guarantee high availability and scalability and be sure there was a comprehensive disaster recovery strategy. Within the data center, PharmaPartners looked at implementing a VPN-1 Power VSX virtual gateway, which enables clustering of multiple security gateways on a single platform to maximize hardware investment and rapid deployment.

In all other “physical gateway” installations, ClusterXL® technology creates high availability by automatically ensuring changes made to a policy on the primary gateway are reflected on the secondary gateway.

THE BENEFITS OF CHECK POINT SECURITY

Information sharing in a secure environment

VPN-1 Power and UTM-1 Edge ensure the security of all VPN traffic and enable doctors and pharmacists to communicate without the risk of malicious attacks or compromising patient information. The eHealthNet system has improved cooperation and communication for more than 2,460 healthcare professionals without risking patient data.

Optimized network performance

FloodGate-1 makes sure there is always sufficient bandwidth assigned to business-critical traffic. In addition, doctors and pharmacists can now easily conduct research or check prices on the Internet at the same time as working with confidential patient data. Any activity that falls outside the trusted zone of eHealthNet is automatically detected and routed to a separate public access network. This policy-based solution is a key component of eHealthNet.

Nonstop, scalable, and manageable security

Aside from PharmaPartners’ need to meet its service-level agreements, providing highly available systems and an adequate disaster recovery strategy can be of do-or-die importance in healthcare. Check Point VPN-1 Power VSX and ClusterXL ensure that doctors can always provide optimum care for their patients.

VPN-1 Power VSX provides PharmaPartners with the ability to keep the IT infrastructure scalable and manageable. In combination with Provider-1, the IT team can change policies or add applications via a centralized console. Another advantage of having a virtual infrastructure is that they can remotely maintain and update the network without needing to visit its 2,400-plus customer locations. “This means I can manage the entire network, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, from one location and with minimal support staff,” Hijl says. “The way we run our network now is about as efficient as it gets.”

The PharmaPartners Future

With Check Point’s comprehensive security solution in place, PharmaPartners has a solid solution to offer to doctors and other practitioners. Its user count is still growing, but the security management tools keep the infrastructure manageable and scalable. PharmaPartners projects that it will have 8,000 users connected to eHealthNet by 2007.

In the future, PharmaPartners plans to provide similar data security services to other organizations, including health insurers, dentists, and hospitals. Hijl concludes, “eHealthNet, which depends on Check Point’s comprehensive security technology, looks set to help us to grow our business substantially over the next few years. We think of it as horizontal growth within our specialist vertical industry.”

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