



Employee Benefits Package

Regional Employee Benefits Office

Taking a proactive approach to
protecting participants' data

Client Success Story

Benefits / Insurance Administration Industry

Business Risk Services
Dynamic Infrastructure

essextec
GETTING IT DONE TOGETHER

High stakes for a trusted member organization

OVERVIEW



A regional employee benefits office that manages benefits for thousands of unionized employees was looking to strengthen and update its IT infrastructure to stay ahead of security risks and regulatory compliance. With members' pension funds and personal health and welfare funds at stake, no safety measure was too great.

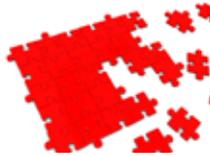
The office handles enormous amounts of personal information, so the threat is high if they don't take the right precautions. "We are the regional office that serves the participants of several local unions, says the office's IT manager. "We administer their health and pension benefits."

In today's office environment, IT professionals who deal with sensitive data face big responsibilities beyond technology. They also manage security and risk.

The benefits office employs approximately 40 people in the administration office and has an efficient, but small IT staff to manage everything from product upgrades to day-to-day operations. The IT department is also responsible for ensuring the security of its systems and compliance of its policies.

CHALLENGE

Welcoming higher standards, but not sure where to start



The passage of the Health Insurance Portability Act (HIPAA) in 1996 required benefits providers such as this benefits office to protect the personal information of its participants. In recent years, the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act toughened HIPAA laws around breach notification. In September of 2013, a new Omnibus Rule went into effect requiring providers to extend the same compliance standards to all of their third party business associates such as vendors.

The HIPAA and HITECH rules are in place to ensure that confidential healthcare information is not exposed to unauthorized parties. These laws require benefits providers to follow a rigorous set of rules to protect data.

The implications are significant for this organization. The benefits office recognized the complex risks around its participants' data and wanted to ensure that member information was protected — and that their IT department was in full compliance.

If the regional office didn't properly classify and protect confidential information, it faced risks beyond non-compliance with HIPAA and HITECH. Their participants' security was at stake. So was their own reputation.

Security has always been a top priority for benefits administrators at the regional office and for its IT department. But, their IT manager was concerned about being completely prepared for a possible HIPAA audit.

"We had documentation in place — policies, procedures, training, records — but it wasn't as organized as it should be," explains their IT manager.

"I trust Essextec to come in and do what's best for us. I have peace of mind."

- IT Manager, Regional Employee Benefits Office

When the issue of data security came to the forefront and the benefits office was looking to ensure their compliance with HIPAA and HITECH rules, Essectec was a natural choice. Craig Shaknis, Vice President and Senior Account Executive at Essectec, is known for being proactive with his clients, often checking in with them to see how things are going — and to understand the client's latest needs. It was his proactive approach during a visit that led to a conversation about HIPAA, security, and compliance.

Essectec had been working with the benefits office since 2007 when they needed a new server system. Since that time, the client has come to trust Essectec based on its account knowledge, customer service, and technical expertise. The relationship has grown over the years.

“The client was very open because they understood the risk,” comments Sean Colicchio, Business Risk Analyst at Essectec. “It shows how dedicated they are to security and protecting member data. They wanted to protect their clients. A lot of employees are also clients, so their own data is in the system — they had a personal stake as well.”

SOLUTION

Business Risk team conducts an assessment - just like an auditor would



Essectec's Business Risk Services team went to work in May 2013 on a new assignment from a longtime client. Essectec performed a penetration test and a HIPAA gap analysis to show the client where they might be vulnerable — and what they could do about it.

The assessment focused on the same types of risks that a HIPAA auditor would. This ensured that the regional benefits office was properly prepared if and when a Health and Human Services (HHS) audit should happen.

“We provided recommendations on how HIPAA compliance should be coordinated within the organization,” says Sean. “The recommendations addressed how the client could ensure that their networks are secure and properly managed, thereby adhering to HIPAA and HITECH requirements, including the Omnibus Rule.”

Essectec also advised the office on industry best practices for risk analysis as well as on HIPAA and HITECH mandated or recommended risk analysis guidelines.

“It was like having a mock audit,” explains the benefits office's IT manager. “Now, if we have a visit from an

actual auditor, we can clearly explain our risk strategy going forward and show the documentation from the work Essectec did for us.”

Based on Essectec's findings, the client is taking action — starting with the most pressing risks. “We're starting with the hard hitters at the top of the list,” says the IT manager. That includes security awareness training of employees. Essectec is working directly with the benefits office on this training.

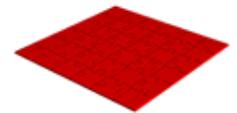
The audit also pointed out areas in which strong security practices are already applied, but needed to be recorded a bit better.

“Fortunately, one thing the analysis confirmed is that we have good practices in place,” states their IT Manager. “But we needed to document it better.”

The small, time-stretched team also needs every advantage in working efficiently — and have smart partners who can help. “Our staff is very minimal,” comments the client's IT Manager. “If there are services I can use Essectec for, I'm going to do it. I don't have the time to look at every system. I know Essectec is going to come in and take care of it. They're looking out for our best interests. That's what I love about them. I trust Essectec to come in and do what's best for us. I have peace of mind.”

RESULTS

Greater clarity. A comprehensive plan. Peace of mind.



Thanks to a penetration test and gap analysis performed by Essectec, the client was armed with the facts they needed to close the gaps where personal health information was most vulnerable. Today, they're actively working with Essectec to ensure their priorities are in order and their actions are all properly documented — should there be an audit in their future.

Essectec helped the benefits office understand and interpret how HIPAA and HITECH rules apply to their own environment and how to manage risk in healthcare environments.

“Essectec's Business Risk Services team went through the findings and delivered them to the executive team who couldn't have been more pleased,” the IT manager states.

Today, the client's IT team knows they're engaging in the safest practices and that confidential member information is secure — both in transit and at rest.

OUR CUSTOMERS' SUCCESS IS OUR SUCCESS

Businesses of all sizes and across all industries are discovering the growing importance of connecting IT strategies and solutions with overall business goals and opportunities. It's critical that the technology environment be dynamic, scalable, highly available, and secure. Businesses must also ensure the integrity of their data, manage compliance mandates, and continually do more with less.

Our decades of experience, along with our broad portfolio of technology solutions and services, give you the confidence you need to thrive amid today's business demands. With technology constantly evolving, our consultants and certified technical experts stay on top of the latest advances to make sure you can remain competitive. We work with the most respected minds in the technology industry to offer a complete portfolio of solutions. We can help you navigate the ever-increasing demands of your business and the technology that powers it — whether your current challenge is:

- > Ensure data security and adherence to industry regulations
- > Defining and implementing a disaster recovery strategy
- > Managing and protecting your mobile consumers and workforce
- > Harnessing your data for sharper, more relevant insights
- > Mitigating company-wide risk
- > Virtualizing and reducing cost

No matter what your current technology challenge, we can help.

Learn more about our solutions and how we are helping businesses address their IT demands.

Visit essextec.com or call our main office at 1-888-519-1518 to learn more or to schedule a consultation.

