South Staffordshire College

Case Study

South Staffordshire College Continuous Penetration Testing

PenTera, the automated penetration testing platform, provides South Staffordshire College the ability to run continuous, automated penetration tests, enabling on-demand network pen-tests to detect the most critical security needs in the environment.

Customer Profile

- A consortium of colleges spread across 4 campuses

- Serving over 11,000 students and 600 staff members

- Lean IT and cybersecurity team implementing advanced cyber security technologies

Results

- Strengthening of password policy after PenTera detected a group password policy that was not applied to the right container, resulting in weak passwords

- Clear value reporting when communicating to the Board of Directors through a dashboard and security resilience score

- Daily or On-Demand penetration tests providing consistent security validation during network changes

- Team independence and increased efficiency through remediation prioritization based on the proven attack vectors

Jason Whitaker
IT DIrector,
South Staffordshire College

"PenTera is like a trusted friend that highlights all the security issues and then categorizes and prioritizes them for us."

Challenges Prior to PenTera

1   **Security Blindspots Due to Sparse Penetration Testing**
The technological transit the organization was advancing required continuous validation that the changes made in the network were not compromising its security resilience, which was not attainable with an annual pen test.

2   **Disordered Patching and Remediation Practices**
The IT team spent many weeks remediating vulnerabilities, which, in retrospect, were not deemed critical. A clear prioritization and kill-chain categorization were needed to focus the team and save time.

3   **Small Team with Multiple Responsibilities**
The lean IT team required tools and automation to complement their resources and knowledge. An annual penetration test rendered them without an available security validation toolkit for the rest of the year.

Background

South Staffordshire College was undertaking a significant IT and cybersecurity transition. This included personnel changes, upgrading tools and systems to top tier technologies, and changing the resource allocation strategy and security planning. The team realized that their annual pen testing practice provided a very limited and insufficient view of the IT network environment, leaving them uninformed about the state of their network.

In addition, while Pre-COVID changes had enabled them to stay afloat, the team was kept very busy and required automated validation they could "fire and forget", yet trust.

"I would remove other tools out of my toolset to pay for PenTera. We run an annual pentest, and would need at least 4-5 of them for peace of mind. PenTera runs daily, so the savings are unparalleled to any security platform."

Long Term Benefits

Had we implemented PenTera 18 months earlier, we would have saved months of misplaced resources.

Real Time Security Validation

With PenTera, South Staffordshire College is able to run penetration tests with a click of a button. Reviewing the effect of the changes as they are implemented prevents negative consequences, unlike with annual penetration tests.

Maximized Team Efficiency

PenTera focuses the team on threat-facing vulnerabilities and prioritizes remediation accurately which saves time. Once PenTera detects an issue, the team turns it into a ticket and the infrastructure manager works on it. In addition, a weekly patching schedule takes place by using Ivanti Patch Management based on PenTera's results.

Clear Tracking Over Time

The PenTera report provides a clear dashboard presented monthly to the Board of Directors with a security resilience score that is monitored over time. The IT team has visibility to the number of discovered devices, total vulnerabilities, the ratio of critical-breachable vulnerabilities, passwords that have been cracked, open shares, anonymous access, and more.

Optimization of the Cyber Security Toolkit

PenTera allows the college to optimize the usage of existing security tools integrated with the SIEM such as Darktrace and F-Secure Radar, by showing where the security controls are effective and integrated well and where there are gaps in policy or configuration.

"The cyber technologies we invested in this year, including PenTera, have been key to our cyber advancement and therefore to our business stability."

Conclusion

The South Staffordshire College's IT department has established itself as the technological forefront in security technologies and in dealing with security risk. The team has come to rely on PenTera's information, prioritization, reporting and simplicity on a daily basis. The team validates security, without having to be experts on a wide set of tools. The clear reporting, straightforward documentation, quick implementation and amicable personal support have turned PenTera into a key tool in the team's work methodology and day to day.

About Pcysys

Pcysys delivers PenTera™, the agentless, automated penetration-testing platform, that assesses and reduces corporate cybersecurity risk. The platform is run remotely on the Cloud or on-site to identify, analyze and focus remediation efforts on breachable vulnerabilities. Hundreds of security professionals and service providers around the world use PenTera to perform continuous machine-based penetration tests that improve their immunity against cyber attacks across their organization network.

About South Staffordshire College

South Staffordshire College is a leading further education college in Staffordshire, England. The college is a consortium of colleges spread across 4 campuses, serving over 11,000 students and employing 600 staff members. South Staffordshire College offers a wide selection of full time, part time and apprenticeship programmes, designed to meet the needs of the local community.

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