

Wolverhampton City Council fortifies remote access with Aventail

The Wolverhampton City Council provides local government services to a current population of approximately 250,000. The Council recently embarked on a project to enable mobile working for its workforce.

To facilitate this project, the Council needed a solution which would deliver secure remote access from a multitude of devices that could be controlled effectively depending on the status of the device.

The challenge: secure remote access to city resources from a multitude of devices

The Council needed the remote access solution to allow different levels of authentication depending on both the device and the access to network resources required. Remote teleworkers include Councillors, other city employees, and third-party support personnel. Many users have their own home PCs and prefer not to have additional Council-provided devices at home. The Council's ICT team needed a way to securely deliver selected services remotely to these home PCs, as well as to Council laptops, Internet kiosks, PDAs. All these requirements also meant ICT had to find a solution which used industry standard technologies, and using facilities that their users already had—a browser, ActiveX and Java.

"We had used another VPN product for basic remote access such as Outlook Web Access, intranet, and some network functionality," says Jo Watts, Principal IT Security Officer. "However, that had several limitations. It did not process UDP. It depended on client installation software with different versions for every end-point OS. It also caused conflicts with some third party applications. In addition, the token authentication relied on a floppy drive, which most PCs do not ship with now."

"An SSL VPN was the obvious solution," says Watts. Out of 20 SSL VPNs originally considered, only Aventail, F5, Whale, and Portwise were invited to present their solution to the technical team to undergo a thorough final evaluation.

"Aventail scored higher than any other vendor," says Watts.

The solution: Aventail's SSL VPN provides secure remote access with high availability

Wolverhampton City Council implemented an Aventail® EX-1500™ appliance with over 200 users. The solution was installed in one day and trialed by Council users over a period of four weeks before going live, and only minimal training was required. "Aventail's user-friendly interface has been great for our end users," says Watts.

Since the Council wanted access to a wide range of devices, ICT needed to ensure that end point devices were free of malware before allowing them to connect to the city's network. "We really liked the control that Aventail would give us," says Watts. "We hadn't been able to identify the end point device before so this immediately increased our ability to secure our network infrastructure."

Aventail® End Point Control™ restricts access based upon the level of trust that ICT has for the user and the end-point environment. Aventail

"The Aventail solution has enabled our fast growing mobile workforce to have the access they require, when they require it, with the right security levels. Aventail's user-friendly interface has been great for our end users."

—Jo Watts, Principal ICT Security Officer



Customer



Partner



Customer Challenge

- Remote access from multiple end-point device types and operating systems
- Remote access to multiple application resources and platforms
- Control of managed and unmanaged end point environments
- Burdensome heavy client installations
- Need for robust availability

Solution

- Aventail® EX-1500™ 100 users with On-Demand, Connect and ConMob
- Aventail® EX-1500 5 users Lab unit
- Aventail® End Point Control™
- Aventail® Secure Desktop
- Aventail® High Availability (HA)

Results

- Easy-to-use, easy-to-control remote access from multiple devices
- Granular data protection across multiple platforms
- Robust, secure, and user-friendly experience
- HA with integrated load balancing for reliability and scalability

Key Applications and Resources Accessed

- Outlook Web Access (OWA)
- IBM Mainframe applications
- Council intranet
- Council network applications

Aventail is the best-of-breed remote access company. Aventail delivered the first SSL VPN solution in 1997 and today is a market leader, delivering a remote access control solution that is the easiest to use and easiest to control. Aventail SSL VPN appliances provide users with transparent, clientless access to more applications from more devices via any network environment. For network managers, Aventail delivers a single secure access gateway for all users, internal and external, to all network resources with complete security. With more than 2.5 million end users around the globe, Aventail is the SSL VPN of choice among mid-sized to large-sized organizations worldwide, including AT&T, Chicago Housing Authority, DePaul University, DuPont, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), IBM Global Services, James Richardson International, Mississippi Department of Corrections, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Overlake Hospital, Radiology Ltd., and Sanyo. For more information, go to www.aventail.com.

SSL VPNs deliver an end-to-end, layered security approach using best-of-breed device interrogation and granular data protection across Windows, Windows Mobile, Linux, and Macintosh platforms. Aventail interrogates for presence of malware, such as key-stroke loggers, as well as for security criteria like antivirus update status, prior to authentication, and allows centrally-managed Deny and Quarantine Zones.

To ensure a robust solution, the Council implemented Aventail High Availability (HA) with integrated load balancing for reliability and scalability. "The HA arrangements were far superior to others we had seen and this was a key requirement in our evaluation," says Watts.

The result: easy-to-use, easy-to-control access from a multitude of devices

With Aventail, users can now connect from a multitude of devices, without the previous need for heavy client installations. "We expected Aventail to deliver a robust, secure and user friendly experience to our customers with differing levels of authentication, end point control, and access," says Watts. "Our Aventail implementation has enabled our fast growing mobile workforce to have the access they require, when they require it, with the right security levels."

"We've been able to immediately increase our security levels just by using Aventail® End Point Control™," says Watts. "We can now be sure of the devices connecting to our network which we couldn't do with our previous VPN. Now our users have full network access from home, get e-mails on the move on PDAs, and access their e-mail from virtually any PC. Aventail has helped us mobilize our workforce and at the same time maintain our high levels of network security."

ICT established authentication upon Active Directory groups, and defined different access control rules for each group. For example, ICT defined access control rules for a member of a Councilor group using an ICT-managed laptop requiring that the user is first RSA token-authenticated before being provided login to Aventail® Connect Tunnel™ for full network access and a true "in-office" experience. Alternately, ICT defined more restrictive access control rules for a member of a Partner group using third-party PC, requiring that not only the user is first RSA token-authenticated, but then also has their unmanaged device scanned using Whole Security, before being provided login using Aventail® OnDemand.

Future plans: extending access to Windows Mobile 5 PDAs and beyond

"We've recently completed a successful PDA trial using Windows Mobile 5," says Watts, "which is now live." With the latest Aventail platform release, the Council anticipates a rise in Aventail use at Wolverhampton for even more use cases over more end point devices.

Company Overview

Dating back to a 10th Century Saxon monastery, the City of Wolverhampton is now a vibrant centre for commerce and culture, and home to one of the UK's largest universities. At the heart of the UK road and rail networks, Wolverhampton today is the largest urban area in the West Midlands after Birmingham, and the 13th largest city in England.

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—Jo Watts,
Principal ICT
Security Officer



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