Delivering a seamless and secure journey to the cloud

One of the largest municipal utility providers in the United States, providing services for over a million residents and businesses. The utility employs +10K staff and aims to provide resources and services to serve their residents in an environmentally responsible way.

How will America's biggest municipal utility secure its applications and services as it moves to the cloud?

Securing access to cloud services has been a major priority as this municipal utility provider begins their cloud journey. Their Cloud Services Manager at the utility, explains: "We are very early on in our cloud migration journey, and we are keen to ensure from the outset that we will have complete visibility and control of the applications and services that our employees will use. We're a government agency, so this consideration is absolutely vital."

While security is a priority for this Cloud Services Manager and their team, it must not get in the way of the performance of the organization's applications or services. "We don't want to control what users do, nor limit access to the point where people struggle with their daily tasks. Our goal is to put in place tools that can secure our systems and protect against 'shadow IT' without users even noticing they are there," says the Cloud Services Manager.

As the provider starts its cloud journey, it does so with extreme caution. As they explain: "Given our position as utilities provider to millions, we simply cannot afford disruptions to essential services to our customers. We are therefore taking a cautious approach to cloud adoption and have sought partners that can help us transform at a pace that's right for our organization."

Profile

Industry	Region	Employees	Revenue
Public Sector	United States	12,000	$1–5B

Challenges
- Achieving visibility of cloud applications
- Delivering a good user experience of cloud apps
- Moving to the cloud without disrupting business-as-usual

Solutions
- Netskope CASB
- Netskope SSPM

Results
- Enhanced visibility and control of cloud apps
- Good user experience maintained
- Permanent test environment for safe cloud migration

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netskope

Security that's ready for anything

Enabling end-to-end network visibility

They identified a cloud access security broker (CASB) as a good fit for their needs. "We quickly zeroed in on Netskope as our partner of choice," says the Cloud Services Manager. "Other vendors treat a CASB as an add-on, whereas Netskope has invested time and effort to create a feature-rich, value-adding solution. The Netskope CASB is future proof and will allow us to securely scale our use of the cloud."

A core component of Netskope Security Service Edge, the Netskope CASB will help them manage the unintentional or unapproved movement of data between cloud apps and in the context of app risk and user risk.

"We're currently at the evaluation phase of deployment," comments the Information Systems Manager. A key part of this program is testing the CASB's integration with Microsoft 365, the first major cloud suite to be deployed by the utility. "We're in learning mode, looking to understand the CASB's capabilities in full before we put in place security policies," they add.

As part of the deployment, they are using Netskope SaaS Security Posture Management (SSPM), which continuously checks security posture by comparing SaaS app settings with security policies and industry benchmarks. The aim is to avoid misconfigurations during the rollout of Microsoft 365, and thereby mitigate potential vulnerabilities.

In addition, the utility provider is utilizing the test tenant capability of the CASB, which provides a permanent test environment. The Cloud Services Manager explains: "The test tenant is crucial for us, as it provides a safe environment in which we can explore Netskope's capabilities without any threat to business-as-usual."

Providing the visibility and control needed to move to the cloud with confidence

When the CASB is deployed, they anticipate a range of benefits. First, is greater visibility and control, as the system will help the IT team understand user behavior and identify use of unsanctioned applications. "Putting in place a new architecture is a huge task," says the Cloud Services Manager. "Netskope will help by providing insights around our application ecosystem and our organizational requirements. It will also play a role in helping us adopt a zero trust architecture as we expand into the cloud."

The ability of Netskope to integrate with third-party solutions is proving to be valuable. For example, our security information event management platform and its secure web gateway solution are both being integrated with the CASB. This will enable the IT team to extract additional value from their existing investments by sharing information for a holistic security view. The Cloud Services Manager comments: "It's a big benefit that Netskope can work with our other security systems as it allows us to identify gaps in our ability to monitor and implement policies."

The overarching benefit of Netskope is that it enables the utilities provider to move to the cloud with confidence. "We want our people to use the full capability of Microsoft 365, from the office, their homes, and out in the field. They must therefore be able to explore the applications without restrictive security policies holding them back. The control and visibility provided by Netskope will allow us to provide users the freedom they need while protecting our data and systems. By enabling effective cloud-based working, Netskope is helping us to work more effectively and improve the service we provide to citizens."

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