Graduating with honors: How one school is acing its data protection test

Case Study

There are schools, and then there's the Hotchkiss School. More like a university than your traditional K12 outfit, the boarding school boasts an 827-acre campus housing everything from a sailing lake and golf course to an art gallery and farm. One of the top private schools in New England, Hotchkiss prides itself on academic excellence and accessibility. Its students receive the best education available, and many go on to attend neighboring Yale or other top universities.

How does a K12 school get top marks for protecting sensitive data?

When it comes to data protection, the Hotchkiss School has its work cut out. There's the personal data of staff and students, yes, but also their financial details. And given that Hotchkiss' 600-strong student body includes the children of celebrities, politicians, and other high-profile individuals, this data is a tempting target for hackers. And that's before we get to the data on the school's donors and trustees, many of whom are big names in the corporate world. Most schools are targets for cybercriminals, but it's easy to see why Hotchkiss needs to take extra care.

An important element of this challenge is protecting data as it transits through the school's systems. Kevin Warenda, Hotchkiss' Director of IT, explains: "Most of our applications are SaaS-based, so we're reliant on third-party vendors doing the right thing. But if something does go wrong, it's our neck on the line. That's why we need greater visibility and control over our staff and students' activity online."

Warenda's team can't simply lock down all potentially risky behavior either. Students need access to information on all sorts of topics that would be blocked by default in enterprises: "They could be studying for a project on gambling, or malware even," says Warenda, "and we need to allow for that." What's more, the school also acts as an ISP for its boarding students and some staff, so it needs to tailor network access to residential connections in a different way than its school network.

HOTCHKISS

Profile

Industry	Region	Established	Employees
K12	U.S	1891	300

Click here to visit The Hotchkiss School website

Challenges

- Protect highly sensitive data
- Increase visibility of users
- Intelligently control access to websites and apps

Solutions

- Netskope CASB for inline cloud security

Results

- Enhanced visibility and control
- Improved security in the cloud
- Seamless integration with technology stack
- Consolidation of security tools means less security complexity

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A top-of-the-class solution for cloud visibility and control

The Hotchkiss School was looking for best-in-class granular visibility into app usage. That's why it deployed the Netskope Cloud Access Security Broker (CASB) solution.

A component of Netskope Security Service Edge (SSE), the CASB enables IT teams to identify and control the use of both managed and unmanaged cloud applications. The tool also prevents sensitive data from being exfiltrated by risky insiders (and few insiders are as risky as students) or malicious cybercriminals.

Like a seasoned schoolmaster who has complete control of their class at all times, the Netskope CASB provides Hotchkiss' security team with inline visibility and control for thousands of apps in use, including users, file names, activity, and other contextual information. The solution provides a deep understanding of cloud service usage and will eventually enable the school to define targeted security policies based on categories including user, app, instance, risk, activity, data, and device type.

Moving forward, another key capability of the Netskope CASB for the Hotchkiss school is that it can enable real-time notifications, such as user coaching around risky activities and moving sensitive data. Over time, this will help the school change risky behaviors and ensure that its other security tools are being used to their full advantage.

Passing the data protection test

With Netskope, Warenda and his team anticipate a greatly enhanced security posture. "The first priority is visibility," he says. "We want to get Netskope on all our machines so we can see where people are going and what they are doing. Armed with that data we'll be able to put in place controls to enhance our security posture."

Netskope will play the role of headmaster in Hotchkiss' security infrastructure, which uses best-in-class systems from a variety of vendors. Warenda explains: "We use a layered defense strategy to be as secure as possible. Netskope ties this all together with a cloud-based tool that touches all endpoints, managed or unmanaged."

Once Hotchkiss has achieved complete inline cloud visibility and has a sense of the challenges it faces, the school plans to use Netskope in several ways. First, it will ensure good security hygiene through real-time prompts to users, for example by telling them not to download sensitive data on a personal storage account. Second, it will use intelligence from Netskope to enrich the data it sends to its managed detection partners, helping to identify trends and improve decision making. Third, Netskope will help the school control access in a highly flexible way that's ideal for its unique needs.

Warenda adds: "There's a lot of companies with great point solutions. But Netskope provides a complete end-to-end capability with a single agent, and every element of the solution is as good as the next. Netskope is that rarest of things: a jack of all trades and a master too. This is a huge benefit as it means we only need to implement one solution, not three or four, and that we can manage everything from the one console."

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