

Insurance Technologies, LLC

Securing a Mid-size Business Network with Solutions from Symantec and AIS Delivers \$98,000 in Annual Savings



Insurance Technologies, LLC needs to protect its intellectual property, as well as the data of the top-tier financial institutions that make up its client base. The firm turned to Symantec and Advanced Internet Security, Inc. for a comprehensive threat management and data protection solution that is enabling it to pass critical security tests, reduce spam, and achieve compliance. The result is increased security at remote sites, dramatically reduced IT staffing needs, and reductions of more than \$110,000 in hard costs the first year and \$98,000 each subsequent year.

Company Profile

Based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Insurance Technologies, LLC (www.insurancetechnologies.com) has 140 employees and offers products such as ForeSight point-of-sale illustration software for the insurance industry. The company serves 10 of the top 30 life insurance companies in the United States.

Industry

Technology

Solution

- Windows Protection
- Comprehensive Threat Management

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Jon Martin

Network Engineer

Insurance Technologies

A classic start

David Fenimore and three founding colleagues are living the American business dream. Ten years ago, they started a software business out of their homes in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Now, with 140 employees on two continents, Insurance Technologies provides a tool that serves 10 of the top 30 life insurance companies in the U.S. market, a number of global insurers, and even the largest financial services company in the world.

The desktop tool that Insurance Technologies makes is called ForeSight. It enables an insurance agent to meet with a prospect, interactively accept data, and then forecast and illustrate the benefits and the eventual outcomes of various insurance options.

For customers, a session with ForeSight is graphical, simple, and immediate, leading to more intelligent choices—and increased sales. Insurance Technologies came into being just as the Web was emerging as a business tool, and they have matured along with it. Now, ForeSight is delivered primarily as a Web service.

A foundation for security from AIS

Not long after leaving the homes and acquiring an “official office,” Insurance Technologies needed a network secure enough to protect the sensitive financial data of its customers, as well as its own growing body of intellectual property. To provide this protection, the company chose a Symantec Raptor™ firewall. “We needed to install it quickly,” recalls Fenimore, “and the firm we had engaged was unable to meet our requirements.”

A Symantec-enabled secure VPN makes possible a connection with India that reduces operational costs by 45 percent.

That's when Insurance Technologies began its relationship with Symantec Platinum Partner Advanced Internet Securities, Inc. (AIS). "Our relationship with AIS was born out of necessity," Fenimore says. "They came in during a pinch. We've since found that Symantec and AIS are flat-out the experts in this industry. They have been nothing but perfect in helping us resolve all solutions involving Symantec products."

A multi-layered defense

Today, the first Raptor firewall at Insurance Technologies has evolved into a number of Symantec™ Gateway Security appliances, at the perimeter of a multi-layered defense. Each appliance offers a full-inspection firewall, antivirus protection, intrusion prevention with adware and spyware capabilities, antispam, intrusion detection, content filtering, IPsec, and SSL VPN technologies—with differing price points and throughput capacities.

This range of appliances has enabled Insurance Technologies and AIS to implement Symantec Gateway Security appliances at remote co-location facilities in Denver and St. Paul, Minnesota—Internet data centers where the firm hosts its customers' applications—where this level of protection might not otherwise be feasible. "This is extremely useful to us because we're getting a complete, one-stop solution for our remote facilities at a very good price, 67 percent lower than the more expensive model," says Gregory Pearl, a senior network engineer at Insurance Technologies.

Passing tough customer tests

An acid test exists for the effectiveness of these appliances and the company's security infrastructure in general. David Fenimore explains: "Because our customers are large financial services companies, each has its own security team. They give our security infrastructure a strict due-diligence inspection, and they conduct random ongoing intrusion and other security testing. We would learn immediately if they found a problem, and no news has been good news."

"The best news is that since we've started with Symantec solutions, we have not had a single service disruption due to security incidents."

Adds Gregory Pearl, "One example is how we blocked the SQL Slammer worm. Our Symantec firewalls come configured to block everything until you actually open up a port, so the port vulnerable to SQL Slammer was not open. While much of the rest of the business world was in a panic, we weren't worried, and we weren't affected."

VPN results in cost savings

Another feature offered by the Symantec Gateway Security appliance is a stable, secure virtual private network (VPN). This gateway-to-gateway VPN has eliminated the need for a dedicated line connecting the firm's main office with its 45-person development office in India. "Getting our development work done in India reduces our operational costs by 45 percent," Fenimore says, "and not having to lease a line contributes to those savings."

“We did the math to see how much billable time spam was costing us, and calculated that we paid for Symantec Brightmail the first two minutes it was turned on.”

Gregory Pearl

Senior Network Engineer
Insurance Technologies

Insurance Technologies also avoids the need for leased lines to its co-location facilities. All in all, the savings from avoiding the seven leased lines that would have been required is approximately \$52,000 annually. ¹

Working from anywhere

In addition, the VPN allows the company's staff to work securely from the field, and its small IT team can perform security and server administration safely from any Web browser. “The two of us in IT save about six hours in commute time per week that we'd otherwise have to take to get off-hour work or changes done,” Pearl says.

“The VPN benefit is especially helpful in supporting our development office,” says Jon Martin, another network engineer at Insurance Technologies. “I can sit at home and administer a server in India. It's awesome.” The overall IT time that the VPN saves through remote administration adds up to about \$47,000 a year. ²

Effective traffic monitoring

Insurance Technologies also worked with AIS to implement Symantec™ Network Security appliances to watch over network traffic. They combine multiple detection technologies, including protocol anomaly detection and vulnerability attack interception, to accurately identify and block both known and emerging attacks and worms.

Each appliance supports up to eight network segments. “Our two appliances inspect all traffic coming in and out of the company, and we're using one of the ports to monitor all internal traffic,” Pearl says.

Spotting problems fast

“Within two hours of setting the appliances up, they pointed out that we had a couple of services going in and out of the company that we shouldn't have, so we shut those services down,” Pearl adds. “Since then, the Symantec appliances have shown where I need to add some service packs and fixes to our operating systems. They're extremely useful.”

The appliances also revealed that employees were actively using POP3 mail to access personal email accounts from within the company. “The POP3 access was a potential hole for the loss of confidential information,” Pearl explains. “We decided to use the content filtering capabilities of our Symantec Gateway Security appliances to block POP3 access. As a result, our intellectual property is more secure. It's an example of how one Symantec solution supports another.”

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Business Drivers

- Demonstrate security best practices to top-tier financial customers
- Protect internal intellectual property and confidential customer information
- Boost productivity and reduce storage costs by minimizing spam
- Reduce the total cost of ownership for network security

Technology Challenges

- Strengthen defenses against network threats and vulnerabilities
- Simplify and centralize security monitoring and reporting
- Control spam without disrupting business with false positives
- Streamline IT administration and desktop provisioning

Solution

Multi-layered Symantec information security and data protection solution

Symantec Products

- Symantec™ Gateway Security appliances
- Symantec™ Network Security appliances
- Symantec Brightmail™ AntiSpam (through third-party filtering service)
- Symantec™ Mail Security appliance (evaluation)
- Symantec Backup Exec™ 10d
- Symantec Ghost™ Solution Suite

Technology Environment

- Applications: ForeSight Enterprise, ForeSight Mobility (proprietary applications)
- Databases: Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- U.S. Server Platform: Dell PowerEdge servers running Microsoft Windows Server 2000 and 2003
- India Server Platform: HP ProLiant and IBM System x servers running Microsoft Windows Server 2000 and 2003
- Storage: Dell PowerEdge 2850, Dell PowerVault NAS server

Symantec Services

- Symantec Gold Support

Symantec Platinum Partner

Advanced Internet Security, Inc.
(AIS; www.advintsec.com)

Blasting spam and increasing productivity

“Spam was a big problem for us before Symantec,” Pearl says. “Jon Martin and I were set up to receive an email alert when there was incoming undesired email content or an email-borne virus. We were getting those alerts every 10 to 15 seconds. We signed up for a third-party hosted email security service that uses Symantec Brightmail™ AntiSpam software, and right away it blocked the spam and viruses. What a relief!”

Brightmail AntiSpam software from Symantec uses 20 filtering technologies which can block up to 95 percent of spam, and achieve an industry-leading accuracy rate of one false positive in one million emails.⁴ Every five to ten minutes, it receives updates on known spam sources from the global Symantec probe network.

Insurance Technologies is currently evaluating a Symantec™ Mail Security appliance to replace its third-party email security service. The appliance combines Brightmail and Symantec AntiVirus technologies, and adds a unique traffic-shaping ability to restrict connections with known spamming sources, as well as filter incoming and outgoing content.

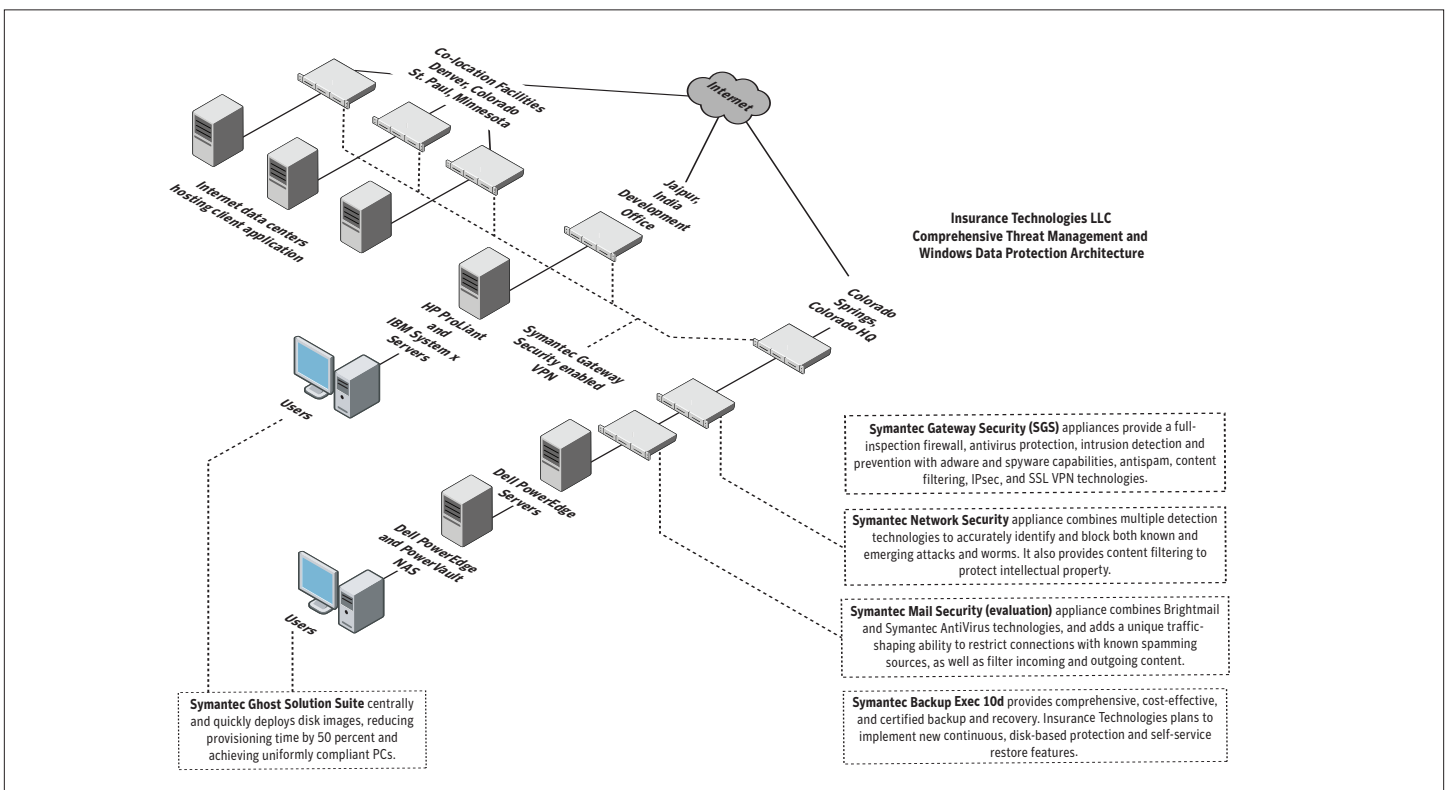
“We did the math to see how much billable time spam was costing us, and calculated that we paid for Symantec Brightmail the first two minutes it was turned on,” Pearl says.

Protecting email—and critical intellectual property

The firm recently worked with AIS to upgrade to Symantec Backup Exec™ 10d software. When an email server recently failed, “Backup Exec did its part in restoring the server within one hour, although the Microsoft portions

of the restoration took a few hours more,” Pearl remembers. “We use Backup Exec both in Colorado and India, and I can personally attest to how well it backs up and restores. It was a relief to get the email back up as fast as we did. And knowing that our intellectual property is backed up on a daily bases gives me peace of mind. That data is our business.”

In the near term, Insurance Technologies plans to turn on the continuous, disk-based data protection feature of Backup Exec 10d, which will enhance data protection and reduce the required frequency of tape backups. The firm is also looking at Backup Exec’s self-service file restoration feature, which will reduce the need for the firm’s small IT staff to get involved when data is accidentally deleted.



“Because of the nature of our business, we need to achieve compliance with HIPAA, the USA PATRIOT Act, and Sarbanes-Oxley, and Symantec solutions play an important role.”

David Fenimore
Senior Vice President
Insurance Technologies

Comfortably consistent workstations

Another time-saving tool from Symantec is Ghost™ Solution Suite software, which uses centrally-stored images to quickly deploy uniformly compliant PCs. “Even though just two of us deploy PCs, we would likely build slightly different machines without the Symantec solution,” Pearl says. “Ghost Solution Suite cuts a four-hour PC deployment by 50 percent to two hours, and also ensures we build the exact same machine.”

“Recently we had an 80-machine rollout,” Pearl continues. “Ghost Solution Suite saved us \$12,000 in IT time during that operation alone.³ The two of us got the job done in less than two months. Without it, we would have needed six months.”

Adds Jon Martin: “If we didn’t have Symantec solutions, we’d have to triple the size of the IT team.”

BUSINESS VALUE AND TECHNICAL BENEFITS

Cost Avoidance/Savings

- \$52,000 annual leased-line costs avoided because of Symantec firewall VPN capabilities
- 67% cost savings due to price/performance of Symantec Gateway Security appliances
- \$47,000 annual savings in IT staff time due to remote administration
- \$12,000 in IT staff time saved during 80 machine rollout

Operational Efficiency

- 45% reduction in operational costs due to offshore development enabled by Symantec secure VPN
- 50% reduction in machine provisioning time due to Symantec Ghost Solution Suite
- 67% reduction in network staffing requirements
- 95% reduction in spam with virtually no false positives

Enhanced Security and Data Protection

- Enhanced ability to win accounts by passing the security inspections of large customers
- No service disruption due to security events
- No disruption from successfully blocked SQL Slammer, unlike many other businesses
- Faster ability to restore email server after server failure, due to Backup Exec
- Intellectual property safeguarded from loss or corruption

Compliance

- Enhanced ability to comply with HIPAA, USA PATRIOT Act, and Sarbanes-Oxley
- Improved enforcement of company policies through content filtering
- Increased ability to deploy compliant machines due to automated provisioning

Payback

- 100% payback on monthly Brightmail service in first two minutes
- 100% payback on all Symantec solutions within one year

Trust and fast payback

“We look to Symantec for everything from data protection to security to compliance,” Fenimore says. “Because of the nature of our business, we need to achieve compliance with HIPAA, the USA PATRIOT Act, and Sarbanes-Oxley, and Symantec solutions play an important role.”

“We achieved payback on all Symantec solutions within one year,” Fenimore concludes. “But their most important benefit is that they just work—and that’s nice to know. They

work day-in and day-out, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year—which is the demand that we place on them.” ■

¹ The VPN feature of Symantec Gateway Security appliance saves Insurance Technologies six ISDN lines at \$600 per month and one T1 line at \$700 per month, totaling \$4,300 per month or \$51,600 (\$52,000) a year.

² Remote administration saves about 90 minutes per incident. 2 staff 4 times a week= 12 hours a week * 52 weeks * \$75/hour = \$46,800 (\$47,000)

³ 80 machines*2 hours saved per machine = 160 hours*\$75/hour = \$12,000

⁴ eWeek 2003, Yankee Group Report 2004