

CHANNEL SUCCESS STORY

Simplifying IT

Managing IT has never been simple, but it seems to be getting more and more complex these days, with 24x7 Internet access, and regulatory compliance, and virtualization, and SOA, and on and on and on. For Guardium, simplifying IT has been part of its core mission since its inception in 2002—focusing specifically on enterprise-level data security with real-time database security and monitoring. The key to Guardium’s success has been a solution that is delivered on a pre-configured appliance that runs a suite of real-time monitoring, security and compliance applications on an embedded Linux kernel running on a Dell PowerEdge server. The result is a highly scalable product that installs quickly and solves some of IT’s most pressing challenges. In fact, Guardium’s product does its job so well, when Dell was looking to simplify its own IT department, it chose Guardium as a solution. This Channel Success Story highlights the ways in which Guardium’s innovative approach can simplify even the most complex IT challenges.

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Case Study: Guardium

By Al Perlman

Managing IT has never been simple. But in the past few years the complexity has increased exponentially, with the demands of regulatory compliance and security, 24x7 Internet access, service-oriented applications (SOA), virtualization, mobile workers, and on and on and on and on.

So the idea of making IT simpler is certainly a welcome proposition—not only to IT professionals everywhere, but also to the thousands of solutions providers and managed services providers that service and support them.

Convincing IT of the need to make things simpler is, well, simple.

Actually doing it, and doing it in a manner that is cost-effective and capable of delivering a significant return on investment, that's the challenge. For Guardium, simplifying IT has been part of its core mission since its inception in 2002—focusing on strengthening enterprise data-level security with real-time database security and monitoring.

"The gap that we saw was that most companies had policies dealing with access to sensitive data, but no practical methods for enforcing these policies," says Phil Neray, vice-president of marketing for Guardium. "Previous methods were impractical because they imposed a high performance overhead on databases or required changes to database configurations. If you're running a business, it's unacceptable to disrupt your business processes just because you're improving security."

The highly innovative solution that Guardium created is an architecture that offers a non-invasive, database-independent platform for monitoring and analyzing all database traffic in real time—including activities by internal "privileged users" such as administrators, developers and outsourced personnel.

What makes the Guardium solution effective in simplifying these operations is that the solution is delivered as a pre-configured appliance that runs a suite of real-time monitoring, security and compliance applications on an embedded and hardened Linux kernel. Because the appliance is pre-configured, the customer's IT organization does not have to manage the underlying database and operating system.

"IT doesn't have to worry about Linux patches, they don't have to hire a database administrator to manage the underlying database," Neray says. "They don't have to buy separate hardware servers and mass storage devices to capture the audit information, or buy separate software licenses for databases, or install and configure system

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software. That's all part of the solution we offer: It not only simplifies and accelerates implementation, it simplifies ongoing management as well."

From the beginning, the Guardium appliance has been built on hardware provided by Dell, utilizing underlying Intel processor technology. To this day all of the Guardium appliances are built on Dell PowerEdge servers.

"That was an early strategic decision," Neray says. "Dell provided us with a reliable hardware platform and their products have always been cost-effective, high performance, and very manageable, with efficient power and cooling requirements."

The fact that Dell's hardware was built on Intel processor technology was also a key requirement.

"Building our systems on an Intel-based architecture made a lot of sense because of economies of scale and we knew
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How Guardium Benefits From Dell's PartnerDirect Program

GUARDIUM MAY NOT FIT THE PROFILE of a "typical" Dell partner or MSP, but it does have one thing in common with more than 14,000 other companies that have been registered or certified as Dell partners in the past year: It is a strong believer in the Dell PartnerDirect program, which was launched in December 2007.

"There's a huge benefit to taking advantage of the Dell PartnerDirect program," says Phil Neray, VP of marketing at Guardium. "From an operational point of view, we leverage the PartnerDirect portal to get information on technical specifications, to have access to our ordering history, to be able to place orders online.

"In addition to the portal, we benefit from being able to get an early view of Dell's road map, so that we can plan an orderly transition to Dell's next-generation products as they continue to add performance and capacity to those systems," Neray adds.

When Dell launched PartnerDirect, the goal was to boost partner sales by creating new benefits to partners, including the PartnerDirect portal on the Dell.com Web site; short-term financing options; online deal registration; plus sales, marketing, training and technical support.

For Guardium, which purchases Dell hardware as the foundation for its appliance, some of those features, such as lead creation or financing, were not necessary. But the creation of the PartnerDirect portal and the support from Dell in other ways has been extremely beneficial to Guardium's operations.

"Online order entry is huge," Neray says. "Sometimes we have to turn around orders in a very short period of time, and that really helps. And we definitely use the product road map."

Neray says having access to Dell's product plans is a real benefit to being part of PartnerDirect. "We're constantly adding capabilities to our system and that requires greater resources in CPU performance, memory, storage," Neray says. "We are constantly looking for how we can squeeze more performance out of the system but still plan a migration path to newer products. By knowing what's down the pike, we can plan that orderly transition and integrate those new products." —By Al Perlman

that Intel—because of its investment in R+D and manufacturing—would improve the architecture for years to come and we knew we wouldn't have to worry about that," Neray adds. "We also knew that we could leverage a huge library of open-source tools to build the system."

And, because Guardium is providing a hardware-based solution, it was important for the company—right from the beginning—to provide hardware support and distribution worldwide. There was no way, as a small company, that Guardium could have delivered adequate levels of hardware support on its own.

"By building on a standard Dell appliance, we can offer our customers rapid response time on a worldwide basis for any hardware issues that might arise," Neray says. "When we started, we were a small company—we simply could not have built our own worldwide hardware support and distribution system. By building on a Dell appliance we could rely on Dell to respond in a very fast timeframe if there are any hardware issues worldwide."

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Simplifying IT At Dell

GUARDIUM HAS BEEN A DELL CUSTOMER SINCE 2002 so, when Dell was looking for solutions to simplify and improve its own IT operations, it was well aware of the capabilities and successes of Guardium.

Dell was seeking a scalable and reliable process to continuously secure and audit access to sensitive, highly restricted data for more than 300 of its most critical database servers in 10 different data centers around the world.

These servers handle financial reporting and credit card transactions and Dell's 24-hour-seven-day-a-week manufacturing operation, and its 24/7 Dell.com Web site. Dell hoped to convert these 300 servers in less than three months, with no disruption in operations and with minimal ongoing impact on database performance.

It sounds like a lot to accomplish in a short period of time, but Guardium was able to do it because of its appliance-oriented architecture. In Phase 1 of the project, to support these 300 database servers, Guardium shipped its appliances to the appropriate data centers around the world—in the Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific—and configured them with the appropriate policies and reports to meet Dell's security and compliance requirements. Among the benefits to Dell are:

- An out-of-the-box solution that streamlines and automates compliance processes for Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX), the Payment Credit Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) and Statement on Auditing Standards Number 70 (SAS70).
- A solution that makes minimal overhead demands on database servers, and is deployable without DBA expertise and without changes to databases.
- Real-time security alerting for critical security events such as brute-force password attacks and SQL injection.
- A single centralized solution that supports multiple database platforms (Oracle and SQL Server) and can be managed from a single console.

In Phase 2 of the deployment, Dell will add monitoring for an additional 725 database servers. This will be a relatively simple upgrade because of the scalable nature of the Guardium architecture—once the S-TAPs are installed on the servers, the rest of the process involves adding new pre-configured appliances. —By Al Perlman

The Guardium appliance, Neray says, is designed to be deployed quickly and is designed to be highly flexible and scalable so that as user requirements change—an increase in transaction volume, for example, or a need to add new database servers—it can also be adapted quickly.

“It’s non-disruptive, and it integrates easily with existing IT environments, such as LDAP and change ticketing systems such as BMC Remedy. During implementation, our services people work closely with our customers to leverage their skills,” Neray says. “We’ve implemented this solution in the most demanding data center environments worldwide, and we have the experience to get things done quickly.”

The actual process of implementing the Guardium solution involves installing what Guardium calls an S-TAP on each database server. The S-TAP is a lightweight software probe that monitors all database traffic at the operating system level. These devices have minimal impact on server performance—Neray says it is typically about 2-4 percent—and they relay all database traffic to Guardium appliances for filtering, analysis and storage.

Utilizing the S-TAPS creates an architecture that is highly scalable: Once the S-TAPS are installed on the servers, the rest of the deployment involves adding appliances that all work together in a multi-tier federated model, with a centralized, cross-DBMS audit repository.

“The focus on highly scalable technologies is one of the guiding frameworks that Intel has adopted in supporting the trend towards simplifying IT,” says Hugues Morin, Intel’s marketing manager for the Americas Marketing Group.

“Going forward, we recognize that IT customers and solutions providers need architectural consistency, to do disaster recovery or to support planned and unplanned maintenance,” Morin says. “Another thing we’re doing, is constantly bringing reliability features you’ve only seen in mainframe or RISC architectures to the Xeon open standard common architecture.”

One of Guardium’s more visible deployments is with Dell itself (see related story). The first part of the Dell deployment has been running since the beginning of the year and Neray says the benefits of the Guardium approach can be measured on two core levels: Operational and strategic.

“On the operational level, Dell is very satisfied with the solution because their database administrators can now focus on delivering new business projects rather than spending time and effort to keep in-house scripts running,” Neray says. “All the reports they need to pass their audits are now prepared automatically and it takes a lot less time to prepare for audits.”

“On the strategic side, Dell now has robust controls in place to safeguard their most critical enterprise data,” Neray adds. “Having these controls in place also raises awareness inside the company about the importance of protecting corporate and customer data. IT has previously focused on protecting network perimeters, but now they are focused on protecting the core of the company’s business—its data—and that’s a significant strategic benefit.”

In less than seven years of operations, Guardium has built a tremendous success story: Its solutions are installed in

more than 450 data centers worldwide, including 3 of the top 4 global banks, 2 of the top 3 global retailers and the #1 global beverage brand. So, having Dell as a partner has been a boon to Guardium.

The partnership with Guardium has been good for Dell as well: When the time came for Dell to put its money where it's mouth was in the move to simplifying IT, it knew just where to go—to a proven, innovative solution right within its PartnerDirect program.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Al Perlman has been writing about the channel since the late 1970s (*sad, but true*). He was the founding editorial director of both *CRN* and *VARBusiness*. More recently he was involved in the launches of the Web sites *MSP Mentor* and *The VAR Guy*, and in the publications *TechIQ* and *Smart Partner*.

Simplifying IT For SMBs, MSPs and the Channel

WHILE GUARDIUM SOLUTIONS ARE DEPLOYED at dozens of large global companies, its architecture is not strictly for the large enterprise. In fact, as Web-based transactions proliferate, and more businesses support remote workers, business intelligence and disparate databases, the need for a companywide approach to database security and monitoring is becoming critical to small and mid-sized businesses worldwide.

"Any company that has sensitive data—including financial, customer and HR data—needs to protect it against both internal and external threats," says Phil Neray, Guardium's vice president of marketing. "In addition, compliance requirements—such as SOX, PCI and HIPAA—apply equally to SMB organizations as to larger enterprises."

As part of its effort to address the SMB market, in addition to the enterprise market, Guardium is building a partner program of its own and currently has about 50 channel partners, including a number of Managed Security Service Providers (MSSPs). Among the key selling points to the channel, Neray says, are the ability to deploy mission-critical solutions quickly and effectively, and the ability for solutions providers to focus on providing higher levels of value-added services.

"One of our messages to solutions providers is that appliance-based solutions are the preferred way to go because end users prefer them," Neray says. "They accelerate deployment time and minimize ongoing maintenance efforts. Our systems typically also support ongoing services—such as customized security policies and adaptations for specific geographical or industry-specific regulatory requirements. This enables our partners to provide a higher level of value added services."

For managed services providers, Neray says, the Guardium solution works both as a method to provide advanced services to end-user customers, and also as a way for MSPs to improve management, security, reliability, scalability and performance within their own data centers. "We enable solutions providers to focus on what they do best—providing services to customers as opposed to configuring and maintaining enterprise software." —By Al Perlman

RESOURCES FROM DELL:



[Learn more about Dell PartnerDirect and how we can help you succeed.](#)

[Learn more about Dell and Intel Client and Enterprise Solutions for partners.](#)

[Learn more about becoming a Dell Certified Partner in Enterprise Architecture](#)

About Dell

Dell Inc. (NASDAQ: DELL) listens to partners and customers to deliver innovative technology and services they trust and value. Via PartnerDirect, Dell's new partner program, channel partners can leverage Dell's business model to operate more profitably and efficiently, as well as to gain access to the cutting-edge technology that has made Dell the #1 choice for business systems globally. We are committed to our channel business and through PartnerDirect, our goal is to create lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with solution providers. Dell's goal for partners: less-complexity, more value. For more information on PartnerDirect and to register in the program, please visit www.dell.com/partner. We hope that you'll join us.

About Intel

At Intel, we believe in innovation. We're driven by it. We live by it. And it's this principle that led us to create the world's first microprocessor in 1971. We never stop looking for the next leap ahead—in technology, education, culture, manufacturing, and social responsibility. Intel's award-winning channel programs have led the industry for over ten years. Today, Intel is excited by the innovation and investments Dell has delivered to help Partners' grow their own businesses.