



CASE STUDY: VALLDATA

CONTINUOUS “BANKING AND THANKING”

Valldata manages all types of donation processes from inbound physical mail with cheques to credit cards, cash, charity vouchers and online transactions. They also include a personalized response to each donation, which supports their deeply held belief of serving as ambassadors for their clients’ brands, commonly referred to as “thanking.”

Their process is simple:

1. Put the money in customers’ bank accounts as quickly as possible.
2. Complete the transactions efficiently, securely, and within the government Gift Aid eligibility standards.
3. Acknowledge and thank the supporters with a letter, e-mail, package or phone call response.
4. Collect transaction methodology data to inform the charities of their supporters’ giving behavior.

Charity donators and supports must feel confident that their money is in safe hands, and that it gets to their desired cause as quickly and securely as possible, and this “banking” aspect requires the highest standards of data security and confidentiality. As such, Valldata works within a number of different compliance mandates and PCI DSS Level 1.



ABOUT

Valldata is headquartered in the United Kingdom, with European operations in Romania. As a leader in payment processing, Valldata prides itself on providing secure, reliable payment solutions to not-for-profit organizations, providing their supporters the flexibility to donate funds (on- or off-line), and processing the funds quickly.

SOLUTIONS

Alert Logic Threat Manager and Alert Logic ActiveWatch:

Managed intrusion detection and vulnerability scanning system

Alert Logic Log Manager and Alert Logic LogReview:

Managed daily log review service



CAPACITY ON DEMAND, ROI WITH SECURITY-AS-A-SERVICE

Valldata continually looks for innovative ways to help clients achieve a better ROI on their fundraising activities. Their ability to handle huge transaction volumes while meeting compliance mandates is paramount to providing exceptional service to their customers. In 2014, Valldata processed £130 million worth of donations; opened 7 million pieces of mail; communicated with 4.5 million supporters and scanned 12 million documents. On average, 80,000 mail items are processed daily and the total value of payments processed for the year was £849,157,207.

Because Valldata's team focuses on what they do best: processing payments, they knew they needed to have separate resources dedicated to the security of those processes. Identifying and employing an individual, much less a team of individuals, was not a viable or affordable option. Their business challenges were to determine how to:

- Check the box for PCI compliance
- Set up 24x7 security monitoring and log management
- Access specialized security skills without needing to bring expertise in-house

Valldata employs a small IT team to protect and support their payments ecosystem and underlying infrastructure. However, given the ever-changing threat landscape, data privacy and compliance requirements (Valldata is a PCI DSS level 1 Merchant and is regulated by the Information Commissioners Office and the UK Gambling Commission for prize draws, raffles and lottery sales), they knew they needed to employ specialized security expertise to maintain their duty of care to customers and their supporters. Jonathan Sowler, Chief Technology Officer at Valldata, explains: "Security and compliance is a top priority for us, and we evaluated both options of recruiting this expertise internally, or finding a security partner to manage it for us. For us it was a no-brainer."

ULTIMATELY, OUR DECISION WAS BASED UPON WHAT MADE THE MOST SENSE. WE CHOSE TO REDUCE THE WORKLOAD ON OUR BUSINESS BY SIMPLY REACTING TO THE TYPES OF ALERTING AND REPORTS WE GET FROM THE DEDICATED 24X7 EXPERT SECURITY TEAMS AT ALERT LOGIC®.

- Jonathan Sowler, Chief Technology Officer

"We are based in a rural area, so access to skills is sometimes difficult. We need to have continuous security and compliance monitoring and analytics and so instead of trying to find someone with the ability to perform log analysis and security monitoring in-house; we knew it would be much more cost effective and efficient to subscribe to Security-as-a-Service. Of course, we wanted to work with a security organization with a great reputation. With that in mind, I asked for opinions from my peers within the financial services industry as well as from leaders within the managed hosting sector. Peers from organizations such as Microsoft, AWS and Rackspace all recommended Alert Logic, as did a number of retailers in the UK," cited Sowler. In their due diligence, Valldata talked with five different security providers and narrowed the field down to the three top contenders for solution evaluations. They immediately found Alert Logic's combination of technology and managed service capabilities backed by security experts to be an ideal fit.

Sowler explained, "Since we have an on-premises environment, we did a bit of work with the infrastructure team to analyze the effort required to implement Alert Logic's solutions. The conclusion was that implementation was very straightforward and it wasn't going to be a big IT project. We would be able to get up and running very quickly. On top of that, the Alert Logic Security-as-a-Service offering came at a competitive price. Ultimately, our decision was based upon what made the most sense. We chose to reduce the workload on our business by simply reacting to the types of alerting and reports we get from the dedicated 24x7 expert security teams at Alert Logic."

IMPLEMENTATION TIME

"Overall, the solution was much easier to implement than Valldata ever anticipated and they benefitted immediately from the notifications received. Getting everything in place involved initial calls and emails to set up the service and Valldata made use of Alert Logic's many online resources. The nice thing is that there was a lot of work at the beginning to make sure everyone was clear on all the processes, but now the infrastructure team simply incorporates the alerts, reporting and best practices from Alert Logic into their day to day operations. From the massive logs we create, Alert Logic provides a precise report which can drive activity within our small team rather than having to react to everything. We get very clear guidance as to what looks like suspicious activity within the infrastructure. That just cuts out a lot of wasted time and effort for us. We have also reviewed a few notifications that were useful in optimizing the configuration of components across the infrastructure. This helps us focus on our core business more effectively and helps manage security practices," said Sowler.

Valldata uses Alert Logic for threat detection and log management across their infrastructure, which is mainly in-house. Inevitably, their plan is to move into the public cloud. "The additional benefit we get with Alert Logic is that we can just extend the solution across our hybrid estate (environment). For a company like ours, in which the cost of processing is really important, having access to specialized skills makes a big difference for us. We have essentially eliminated our need to go out and hire an expensive in-house security expert. Bottom line – the best part of working with Alert Logic is that I hear about it very little. The right security checks and balances are in place and it is working really well," explained Sowler.

ABOUT ALERT LOGIC

Alert Logic, the leader in security and compliance solutions for the cloud, provides Security-as-a-Service for on-premises, cloud, and hybrid infrastructures, delivering deep security insight and continuous protection for customers at a lower cost than traditional security solutions. Fully managed by a team of experts, the Alert Logic Security-as-a-Service solution provides network, system and web application protection immediately, wherever your IT infrastructure resides. Alert Logic partners with the leading cloud platforms and hosting providers to protect over 2,800 organizations worldwide. Built for cloud scale, our patented platform stores petabytes of data, analyses over 450 million events and identifies over 60,000 security incidents each month, which are managed by our 24x7 Security Operations Center. Alert Logic, founded in 2002, is headquartered in Houston, Texas, with offices in Seattle, Cardiff and London. For more information, please visit www.alertlogic.com.